THE
DOUBLE DEALER.

A

COMEDY.

BY

WILLIAM CONGREVE.

INTERDUM TAMEN, ET VOCEM COMOEDIA TOLLIT.
HOR. AR. PO.

HUIC EQUIDEM CONSILIO PALMAM DO: HIC ME MAGNIFICE EFFERO, QUI VIM TANTAM IN ME ET POTESTATEM HABEBAM TANTAE ASTUTIAE, VERA DICENDO UT EOS AMBOS FALLAM.
Syr. in Terent. Heaut.

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BRITISH MUSEUM
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DEC

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES MONTAGUE,

ONE OF THE

LORDS OF THE TREASURY.

SIR,

I Heartily wiſh this Play were as perfect as I intended it, that it might be more worthy your acceptance; and that my dedication of it to you, might be more becoming that honour and eſteem which I, with every body, who is ſo fortunate as to know you, have for you. It had your countenance when yet unknown; and now it is made public, it wants your protection.

I would not have any body imagine, that I think this Play without its faults, for I am conſcious of ſeveral. I confeſs I deſign'd (whatever vanity or ambition occaſion'd that deſign) to have written a true and regular comedy: but I found it an undertaking which put me in mind of——*Sudet multum, fruſtraque laboret auſus idem.* And now to make amends for the vanity of ſuch a deſign, I do confeſs both the attempt, and the imperfect performance. Yet I muſt take the boldneſs to ſay, I have not miſcarry'd in the whole; for the mechanical part of it is regular.

That I may ſay with as little vanity, as a builder may ſay he has built a houſe according to the model laid down before him; or a gardner that he has ſet his flowers in a knot of ſuch or ſuch a figure. I deſign'd the moral firſt, and to that moral I invented the fable, and do not know that I have borrow'd one hint of it any where. I made the plot as ſtrong as I could, becauſe it was ſingle, and I made it ſingle, becauſe I would avoid confuſion, and was reſolved to preſerve the three unities of the Drama. Sir, this Diſcourſe is very impertinent to you, whoſe judgement much better can diſcern the faults, than I can excuſe them; and whoſe good nature, like that of a lover, will find out thoſe hidden beauties (if there are any ſuch) which it wou'd be great immodeſty for me to diſcover. I think I don't ſpeak improperly when I call you a *Lover* of Poetry; for it is very well known ſhe has been a very kind miſtreſs to you; ſhe has not deny'd you the leaſt favour; and ſhe has been fruitful to you in a moſt beautiful iſſue—If I break off abruptly here, I hope every body will underſtand that it is to avoid a commendation, which, as it is your due, would be moſt eaſy for me to pay, and too troubleſome for you to receive.

I have, ſince the acting of this Play, harken'd after the objections which have been made to it; for I was conſcious where a true critic might have put me upon my defence. I was prepared for the attack; and am pretty confident I could have vindi-

cated ſome parts, and excuſed others; and where there were any plain miſcarriages, I would moſt ingenuouſly have confeſs'd 'em. But I have not heard any thing ſaid ſufficient to provoke an anſwer. That which looks moſt like an objection, does not relate in particular to this Play, but to all or moſt that ever have been written; and that is Soliloquy. Therefore I will anſwer it, not only for my own ſake, but to ſave others the trouble, to whom it may hereafter be objected.

I grant, that for a man to talk to himſelf, appears abſurd and unnatural; and indeed it is ſo in moſt caſes; but the circumſtances which may attend the occaſion, make great alteration. It oftentimes happens to a man, to have deſigns which require him to himſelf, and in their nature cannot admit of a confident. Such, for certain, is all villany; and other leſs miſchievous intentions may be very improper to be communicated to a ſecond perſon. In ſuch a caſe therefore the audience muſt obſerve, whether the perſon upon the ſtage takes any notice of them at all, or no. For if he ſuppoſes any one to be by, when he talks to himſelf, it is monſtrous and ridiculous to the laſt degree. Nay, not only in this caſe, but in any part of a play, if there is expreſſed any knowledge of an audience, it is inſufferable. But otherwiſe, when a man in ſoliloquy reaſons with himſelf, and *Pro*'s and *Con*'s, and weighs all his deſigns: we ought not to imagine that this man either

talks to us, or to himſelf; he is only thinking, and thinking ſuch matter as were inexcuſable folly in him to ſpeak. But becauſe we are conceal'd ſpectators of the plot in agitation, and the poet finds it neceſſary to let us know the whole myſtery of his contrivance, he is willing to inform us of this perſon's thoughts; and to that end is forc'd to make uſe of the expedient of ſpeech, no other better way being yet invented for the communication of thought.

Another very wrong objection has been made by ſome who have not taken leiſure to diſtinguiſh the characters. The Hero of the Play, as they are pleas'd to call him, (meaning MELLEFONT) is a gull, and made a fool, and cheated. Is every man a gull and a fool that is deceiv'd? at that rate I'm afraid the two claſſes of men will be reduc'd to one, and the knaves themſelves be at a loſs to juſtify their title: but if an open-hearted honeſt man, who has an entire confidence in one whom he takes to be his friend, and whom he has oblig'd to be ſo; and who (to confirm him in his opinion) in all appearance, and upon ſeveral trials has been ſo: if this man be deceiv'd by the treachery of the other; muſt he of neceſſity commence fool immediately, only becauſe the other has prov'd a villain? ay, but there was caution given to MELLEFONT in the firſt act by his friend CARELESS. Of what nature was that caution? only to give the audience ſome light into the character of MASKWELL, before his appearance; and not to convince MELLE-

FONT of his treachery; for that was more than CARELESS was then able to do: he never knew MASKWELL guilty of any villainy; he was only a ſort of Man which he did not like. As for his ſuſpecting his familiarity with my Lady TOUCHWOOD: Let 'em examine the anſwer that MELLEFONT makes him, and compare it with the conduct of MASKWELL's character through the Play.

I would beg 'em again to look into the character of MASKWELL before they accuſe MELLEFONT of weakneſs for being deceiv'd by him. For upon ſumming up the enquiry into this objection, it may be found they have miſtaken cunning in one character, for folly in another.

But there is one thing, at which I am more concerned than all the falſe criticiſms that are made upon me; and that is, ſome of the ladies are offended. I am heartily ſorry for it, for I declare I would rather diſoblige all the critics in the world, than one of the fair ſex. They are concerned that I have repreſented ſome women vicious and affected: how can I help it? it is the buſineſs of a Comic Poet to paint the vices and follies of human-kind; and there are but two ſexes, male, and female, Men, and Women, which have a title to humanity: and if I leave one half of them out, the work will be imperfect. I ſhould be very glad of an opportunity to make my compliment to thoſe ladies who are offended: but they can no more expect it in a Comedy, than to be

tickled by a ſurgeon, when he's letting 'em blood. They who are virtuous or diſcreet, ſhould not be offended, for ſuch characters as theſe diſtinguiſh them, and make their beauties more ſhining and obſerved: and they who are of the other kind, may nevertheleſs paſs for ſuch, by ſeeming not to be diſpleas'd, or touch'd with the ſatire of this Comedy. Thus have they alſo wrongfully accus'd me of doing them a prejudice, when I have in reality done them a ſervice.

You will pardon me, Sir, for the freedom I take of making anſwers to other people, in an epiſtle which ought wholly to be ſacred to you: but ſince I intend the Play to be ſo too, I hope I may take the more liberty of juſtifying it, where it is in the right.

I muſt now, Sir, declare to the world, how kind you have been to my endeavours; for in regard of what was well meant, you have excus'd what was ill perform'd. I beg you would continue the ſame method in your acceptance of this dedication. I know no other way of making a return to that humanity you ſhew'd, in protecting an infant, but by enrolling it in your ſervice, now that it is of age and come into the world. Therefore be pleas'd to accept of this as an acknowledgment of the favour you have ſhewn me, and an earneſt of the real ſervice and gratitude of,

SIR,

Your Moſt Obliged,
Humble Servant,
WILLIAM CONGREVE.

TO MY DEAR FRIEND

MR. CONGREVE,

ON HIS COMEDY CALL'D,

THE DOUBLE DEALER.

WELL then; the promis'd hour is come at laſt;
The preſent age of wit obſcures the paſt:
Strong were our ſires; and as they fought they writ,
Conquering with force of arms, and dint of wit;
Theirs was the giant race, before the flood;
And thus, when Charles return'd, our empire ſtood.
Like Janus he the ſtubborn ſoil manur'd,
With rules of husbandry the rankneſs cur'd:
Tam'd us to manners, when the ſtage was rude;
And boiſtrous Engliſh wit, with art indu'd.
Our age was cultivated thus at length;
But what we gain'd in skill, we loſt in ſtrength.
Our builders were, with want of genius, curſt;
The ſecond temple was not like the firſt:
Till you, the beſt Vitruvius, come at length;
Our beauties equal; but excel our ſtrength.
Firm Dorique pillars found your ſolid baſe:
The fair Corinthian crowns the higher ſpace;
Thus all below is ſtrength, and all above is grace.
In eaſy dialogue is Fletcher's praiſe:
He mov'd the mind, but had not pow'r to raiſe.
Great Johnſon did by ſtrength of judgment pleaſe:
Yet doubling Fletcher's force, he wants his eaſe.

To Mr. Congreve.

In diff'ring talents both adorn'd their age;
One for the ſtudy, t'other for the ſtage.
But both to Congreve juſtly ſhall ſubmit,
One match'd in judgment, both o'ermatch'd in wit.
In him all beauties of this age we ſee;
Etherege his courtſhip, Southern's purity;
The ſatire, wit, and ſtrength of manly Wycherly.
All this in blooming youth you have atchiev'd;
Nor are your foil'd contemporaries griev'd;
So much the ſweetneſs of your manners move,
We cannot envy you, becauſe we love.
Fabius might joy in Scipio, when he ſaw
A beardleſs conſul made againſt the law,
And join his ſuff'rage to the votes of Rome;
Tho' he with Hannibal was overcome.
Thus old Romano bow'd to Raphael's fame;
And ſcholar to the youth he taught, became.
Oh that your brows my lawrel had ſuſtain'd,
Well had I been depos'd, if you had reign'd!
The father had deſcended for the ſon;
For only You are lineal to the throne.
Thus when the ſtate one Edward did depoſe;
A greater Edward in his room aroſe.
But now, not I, but Poetry is curs'd;
For Tom the ſecond reigns like Tom the firſt.
But let 'em not miſtake my patron's part;
Nor call his charity their own deſert.
Yet this I prophesy; Thou ſhalt be ſeen,
(Tho' with ſome ſhort parentheſis between:)
High on the throne of wit; and ſeated there,
Not mine (that's little) but thy lawrel wear.
Thy firſt attempt an early promiſe made;
That early promiſe this has more than paid.

To Mr. Congreve.

So bold, yet ſo judiciouſly you dare,
That your leaſt praiſe, is to be regular.
Time, place, and action, may with pains be wrought,
But genius muſt be born; and never can be taught.
This is your portion; this your native ſtore;
Heav'n, that but once was prodigal before,
To Shakeſpear gave as much; ſhe could not give him more.
Maintain your poſt: that's all the fame you need;
For 'tis impoſſible you ſhould proceed.
Already I am worn with cares and age;
And juſt abandoning th' ungrateful ſtage:
Unprofitably kept at Heav'n's expence,
I live a rent-charge on his providence;
But You, whom ev'ry muſe and grace adorn,
Whom I foreſee to better fortune born,
Be kind to my remains; and oh defend,
Againſt your judgment, your departed friend!
Let not th' inſulting foe my fame purſue;
But ſhade thoſe laurels which deſcend to you:
And take for tribute what theſe lines expreſs:
You merit more; nor could my love do leſs.

JOHN DRYDEN.

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE.

MOORS have this way (as ſtory tells) to know
Whether their brats are truely got, or no;
Into the ſea the new-born babe is thrown,
There, as inſtinct directs, to ſwim, or drown.
A barbarous device, to try if ſpouſe
Has kept religiouſly her nuptial vows.

Such are the trials, Poets make of Plays:
Only they truſt to more inconſtant ſeas;
So does our Author, this his Child commit
To the tempeſtuous mercy of the pit,
To know if it be truly born a wit.

Critics avaunt; for you are fiſh of prey,
And feed, like ſharks, upon an Infant Play.
Be ev'ry monſter of the deep away;
Let's a fair trial have, and a clear ſea.

Let nature work, and do not damn too ſoon,
For life will ſtruggle long, ere it ſink down:
And will at leaſt riſe thrice, before it drown.
Let us conſider, had it been our fate,
Thus hardly to be prov'd legitimate!
I will not ſay, we'd all in danger been,
Were each to ſuffer for his mother's ſin:
But by my troth I cannot avoid thinking,
How nearly ſome good men might have 'ſcap'd ſinking.

But, heav'n be prais'd, this cuſtom is confin'd
Alone to th' offspring of the muſes kind:
Our Chriſtian cuckolds are more bent to pity;
I know not one Moor-husband in the city.
I' th' good man's arms the chopping baſtard thrives,
For he thinks all his own, that is his wife's.

Whatever Fate is for this Play deſign'd,
The Poet's ſure he ſhall ſome comfort find:
For if his Muſe has play'd him falſe, the worſt
That can befal him, is, to be divorc'd;
You husbands judge, if that be to be curs'd.

Dramatis Perſonae.

MEN.

Maſkwell, a villain; pretended friend to *Mellefont*, gallant to Lady *Touchwood*, and in love with *Cynthia*.	Mr. *Betterton*.
Lord *Touchwood*, uncle to *Mellefont*.	Mr. *Kynaſton*.
Mellefont, promiſed to, and in love with *Cynthia*.	Mr. *Williams*.
Careleſs, his friend.	Mr. *Verbruggen*.
Lord *Froth*, a ſolemn coxcomb.	Mr. *Bowman*.
Briſk, a pert coxcomb.	Mr. *Powell*.
Sir *Paul Plyant*, an uxorious, fooliſh, old knight; brother to Lady *Touchwood*, and father to *Cynthia*.	Mr. *Dogget*.

WOMEN.

Lady *Touchwood*, in love with *Mellefont*.	Mrs. *Barry*.
Cynthia, daughter to Sir *Paul* by a former wife, promiſed to *Mellefont*.	Mrs. *Bracegirdle*.
Lady *Froth*, a great cocquet; pretender to poetry, wit, and learning.	Mrs. *Mountfort*.
Lady *Plyant*, inſolent to her husband, and eaſy to any pretender.	Mrs. *Leigh*.

Chaplain, *Boy*, *Footmen*, and *Attendants*.

The SCENE, a gallery in the Lord TOUCHWOOD's houſe, with chambers adjoining.

THE
DOUBLE DEALER.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A gallery in the Lord TOUCHWOOD'*s houſe, with chambers adjoining.*

Enter CARELESS, *croſſing the ſtage, with his hat, gloves, and ſword in his hands; as juſt riſen from table:* MELLEFONT *following him.*

MELLEFONT.

NED, Ned, whither ſo faſt? what, turn'd flincher! why, you wo' not leave us?

Care. Where are the women? I'm weary of guzling, and begin to think them the better company.

Mel. Then thy reaſon ſtaggers, and thou'rt almoſt drunk.

Care. No faith, but your fools grow noiſy———and if a man muſt endure the noiſe of words without ſenſe, I think the women have more muſical voices, and become nonſenſe better.

Mel. Why, they are at the end of the gallery; retir'd to their tea, and ſcandal; according to their ancient cuſtom, after dinner.——— But I made a pretence to follow you, becauſe I had ſomething to ſay to you in private, and I am not like to have many opportunities this evening.

Care. And here's this coxcomb moſt critically come to interrupt you.

SCENE II.

[*To them*] BRISK.

Brisk. BOYS, boys, lads, where are you? what, do you give ground? mortgage for a bottle, ha? Careleſs, this is your trick; you're always ſpoiling company by leaving it.

Care. And thou art always ſpoiling company by coming into't.

Brisk. Pooh, ha, ha, ha. I know you envy me. Spite, proud ſpite, by the gods! and burning envy———I'll be judg'd by Mellefont here, who gives and takes raillery better, you or I. Pſhaw, man, when I ſay you ſpoil company by leaving it, I mean you leave no body for the company to laugh at. I think there I was with you, ha? Mellefont.

Mel. O' my word, Brisk, that was a home thruſt; you have ſilenc'd him.

Brisk. Oh, my dear Mellefont, let me periſh, if thou art not the ſoul of converſation, the very eſſence of wit, and ſpirit of wine,—— The deuce take me if there were three good things ſaid, or one underſtood, ſince thy amputation from the body of our ſociety.———He! I think that's pretty and metaphorical enough: I'Gad I could not have ſaid it out of thy company———Careleſs, ha?

Care. Hum, ay, what is't?

Brisk. O, *Mon Coeur!* what is't! nay gad I'll puniſh you for want of apprehenſion: the deuce take me if I tell you.

Mel. No, no, hang him, he has no taſte,—— But, dear Brisk, excuſe me, I have a little buſineſs.

Care. Pr'ythee get thee gone; thou ſeeſt we are ſerious.

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Mel. We'll come immediately, if you'll but go in, and keep up good humour and ſenſe in the company; pr'ythee do, they'll fall aſleep elſe.

Brisk. I'gad ſo they will——Well, I will, I will, gad you ſhall command me from the Zenith to the Nadir.——But the deuce take me if I ſay a good thing 'till you come.——But pr'ythee, dear rogue, make haſte, pr'ythee make haſte, I ſhall burſt elſe.——And yonder's your uncle, my Lord Touchwood, ſwears he'll diſinherit you, and Sir Paul Plyant threatens to diſclaim you for a ſon-in-law, and my Lord Froth won't dance at your wedding to-morrow; nor the deuce take me, I won't write your Epithalamium——and ſee what a condition you're like to be brought to.

Mel. Well, I'll ſpeak but three words, and follow you.

Brisk. Enough, enough, Careleſs bring your apprehenſion along with you.

SCENE III.

MELLEFONT, CARELESS.

Care. PErt coxcomb!

Mel. Faith 'tis a good-natur'd coxcomb, and has very entertaining follies——You muſt be more humane to him; at this juncture, it will do me ſervice.——I'll tell you, I would have mirth continued this day at any rate; tho' patience purchaſe folly, and attention be paid with noiſe: there are times when ſenſe may be unſeaſonable, as well as truth. Pr'ythee do thou wear none to-day; but allow Brisk to have wit, that thou may'ſt ſeem a fool.

Care. Why, how now, why this extravagant propoſition?

Mel. O, I would have no room for ſerious deſign; for I am jealous of a plot. I would have noiſe and impertinence keep my Lady Touchwood's head from working: for hell is not more buſy than her brain, nor contains more devils, than that imagination.

Care. I thought your fear of her had been over——Is not to-morrow appointed for your marriage with Cynthia; and her father, Sir Paul Plyant, come to ſettle the writings this day, on purpoſe?

Mel. True; but you ſhall judge whether I have not reaſon to be alarm'd. None beſides you, and Maskwell, are acquainted with the ſecret of my aunt Touchwood's violent paſſion for me. Since my firſt refuſal of her addreſſes, ſhe has endeavour'd to do me all ill offices with my uncle; yet has managed 'em with that ſubtilty, that to him they have borne the face of kindneſs; while her malice, like a dark lanthorn, only ſhone upon me, where it was directed. Still it gave me leſs perplexity to prevent the ſucceſs of her diſpleaſure, than to avoid the importunities of her love; and of two evils, I thought myſelf favour'd in her averſion: but whether urg'd by her deſpair, and a ſhort proſpect of time ſhe ſaw, to accompliſh her deſigns; whether the hopes of revenge, or of her love, terminated in the view of this my marriage with Cynthia, I know not; but this morning ſhe ſurpriz'd me in my bed.——

Care. Was there ever ſuch a fury! 'tis well nature has not put it into her ſex's power to raviſh.—— Well, bleſs us! proceed. What follow'd?

Mel. What at firſt amaz'd me; for I look'd to have ſeen her in all the tranſports of a ſlighted and revengeful woman: but when I expected thunder from her voice, and lightning in her eyes; I ſaw her melted into tears, and huſh'd into a ſigh. It was long before either of us

ſpoke; paſſion had ty'd her tongue, and amazement mine ——— In ſhort, the conſequence was thus, ſhe omitted nothing that the moſt violent love could urge, or tender words expreſs; which when ſhe ſaw had no effect, but ſtill I pleaded honour and nearneſs of blood to my uncle; then came the ſtorm I fear'd at firſt: for ſtarting from my bed-ſide like a fury, ſhe flew to my ſword, and with much ado I prevented her doing me or herſelf a miſchief: having diſarm'd her, in a guſt of paſſion ſhe left me, and in a reſolution, confirm'd by a thouſand curſes, not to cloſe her eyes, 'till they had ſeen my ruin.

Care. Exquiſite woman! but what the devil does ſhe think, thou haſt no more ſenſe, than to get an heir upon her body to diſinherit thyſelf: For as I take it, this ſettlement upon you, is, with a proviſo, that your uncle have no children.

Mel. It is ſo. Well, the ſervice you are to do me, will be a pleaſure to yourſelf; I muſt get you to engage my Lady Plyant all this evening, that my pious aunt may not work her to her intereſt. And if you chance to ſecure her to yourſelf, you may incline her to mine. She's handſome, and knows it; is very ſilly, and thinks ſhe has ſenſe, and has an old fond husband.

Care. I confeſs, a very fair foundation, for a lover to build upon.

Mel. For my Lord Froth, he and his wife will be ſufficiently taken up, with admiring one another, and Brisk's gallantry, as they call it. I'll obſerve my uncle myſelf; and Jack Maskwell has promiſed me, to watch my aunt narrowly, and give me notice upon any ſuſpicion. As for Sir Paul, my wife father-in-law that is to be, my dear Cynthia has ſuch a ſhare in his fatherly fondneſs, he would ſcarce make her a moment uneaſy, to have her happy hereafter.

Care. So, you have mann'd your works: but I wiſh you may not have the weakeſt guard, where the enemy is ſtrongeſt.

Mel. Maskwell, you mean; pr'ythee why ſhould you ſuſpect him?

Care. Faith I cannot help it, you know I never lik'd him; I am a little ſuperſtitious in phyſiognomy.

Mel. He has obligations of gratitude, to bind him to me; his dependance upon my uncle is through my means.

Care. Upon your aunt, you mean.

Mel. My aunt!

Care. I'm miſtaken if there be not a familiarity between them, you do not ſuſpect: notwithſtanding her paſſion for you.

Mel. Pooh, pooh, nothing in the world but his deſign to do me ſervice; and he endeavours to be well in her eſteem, that he may be able to effect it.

Care. Well, I ſhall be glad to be miſtaken; but, your aunt's averſion in her revenge, cannot be any way ſo effectually ſhown, as in bringing forth a child to diſinherit you. She is handſome and cunning, and naturally wanton. Maskwell is fleſh and blood at beſt, and opportunities between them are frequent. His affection to you, you have confeſſed, is grounded upon his intereſt, that you have tranſplanted; and ſhould it take root in my lady, I don't ſee what you can expect from the fruit.

Mel. I confeſs the conſequence is viſible, were your ſuſpicions juſt.——But ſee, the company is broke up, let's meet 'em.

SCENE IV.

[*To them*] *Lord* TOUCHWOOD, *Lord* FROTH, *Sir* PAUL PLYANT, *and* BRISK.

Lord Touch. OUT upon't, nephew——Leave your father-in-law, and me, to maintain our ground againſt young people.

Mel. I beg your lordſhip's pardon——We were juſt returning.

Sir P. Plyant. Were you, ſon? gadsbud much better as it is——Good, ſtrange! I ſwear I'm almoſt tipſy—t'other bottle would have been too powerful for me,——as ſure as can be it would.—We wanted your company: But Mr. Brisk——Where is he? I ſwear and vow, he's a moſt facetious perſon——and the beſt company.——And, my Lord Froth, your Lordſhip is ſo merry a man, he, he, he.

Lord Froth. O foy, Sir Paul, what do you mean? merry! O barbarous! I'd as lieve you call'd me fool.

Sir P. Plyant. Nay, I proteſt and vow now, 'tis true; when Mr. Brisk jokes, your lordſhip's laugh does ſo become you, he, he, he.

Lord Froth. Ridiculous! Sir Paul, you're ſtrangely miſtaken, I find Champagne is powerful. I aſſure you, Sir Paul, I laugh at no body's jeſt but my own, or a lady's; I aſſure you, Sir Paul.

Brisk. How? how, my Lord? what, affront my wit! let me periſh, do I never ſay any thing worthy to be laugh'd at?

Lord Froth. O foy, don't miſapprehend me, I don't ſay ſo, for I often ſmile at your conceptions. But there is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality, than to laugh; 'tis ſuch a vulgar expreſſion of the paſſion! every

body can laugh. Then eſpecially to laugh at the jeſt of an inferior perſon, or when any body elſe of the ſame quality does not laugh with one; ridiculous! to be pleaſed with what pleaſes the crowd! now when I laugh, I always laugh alone.

Brisk. I ſuppoſe that's becauſe you laugh at your own jeſts, l'gad, ha, ha, ha.

Lord Froth. He, he, I ſwear tho', your raillery provokes me to a ſmile.

Brisk. Ay, my Lord, it's a ſign I hit you in the teeth, if you ſhow 'em.

Lord Froth. He, he, he, I ſwear that's ſo very pretty, I can't forbear.

Care. I find a quibble bears more ſway in your Lordſhip's face than a jeſt.

Lord Touch. Sir Paul, if you pleaſe we'll retire to the ladies, and drink a diſh of tea, to ſettle our heads.

Sir P. Plyant. With all my heart.——Mr. Brisk, you'll come to us———or call me when you joke, I'll be ready to laugh incontinently.

SCENE V.

MELLEFONT, CARELESS, *Lord* FROTH, BRISK.

Mel. BUT does your lordſhip never ſee comedies?

Lord Froth. O yes, ſometimes,———But I never laugh.

Mel. No?

Lord Froth. Oh, no,——never laugh indeed, Sir.

Care. No! why what d'ye go there for?

Lord Froth. To diſtinguiſh myſelf from the commonalty, and mortify the Poets; the fellows grow ſo conceited, when any of their fooliſh wit prevails upon the ſide-boxes. — I ſwear,—he, he, he, I have often conſtrain'd my

inclinations to laugh,——he, he, he, to avoid giving them encouragement.

Mel. You are cruel to yourſelf, my Lord, as well as malicious to them.

Lord Froth. I confeſs I did myſelf ſome violence at firſt, but now I think I have conquered it.

Brisk. Let me periſh, my Lord, but there is ſomething very particular in the humour; 'tis true, it makes againſt wit, and I'm ſorry for ſome friends of mine that write, but——— I'gad, I love to be malicious.——— Nay, deuce take me there's wit in't too———and wit muſt be foil'd by wit; cut a diamond with a diamond; no other way i'gad.

Lord Froth. Oh, I thought you would not be long, before you found out the wit.

Care. Wit! in what? where the devil's the wit, in not laughing when a man has a mind to't?

Brisk. O Lord, why, can't you find it out?———Why there 'tis, in the not laughing———Don't you apprehend me?—— My Lord, Careleſs is a very honeſt fellow, but harkee,———you underſtand me, ſomewhat heavy, a little ſhallow, or ſo——Why I'll tell you now: ſuppoſe now you come up to me———Nay, pr'ythee Careleſs be inſtructed. Suppoſe, as I was ſaying, you come up to me holding your ſides, and laughing, as if you would—— Well—I look grave, and ask the cauſe of this immoderate mirth———You laugh on ſtill, and are not able to tell me—Still I look grave, not ſo much as ſmile.

Care. Smile, no, what the devil ſhould you ſmile at, when you ſuppoſe I can't tell you?

Brisk. Pſhaw, pſhaw, pr'ythee don't interrupt me.—— But I tell you, you ſhall tell me———at laſt—But it ſhall be a great while firſt.

Care. Well, but pr'ythee don't let it be a great while, becauſe I long to have it over.

Brisk. Well then, you tell me ſome good jeſt, or very witty thing, laughing all the while as if you were ready to die—and I hear it, and look thus.—Would not you be diſappointed?

Care. No; for if it were a witty thing, I ſhould not expect you to underſtand it.

Lord Froth. O foy, Mr. Careleſs, all the world allows Mr. Brisk to have wit; my wife ſays, he has a great deal. I hope you think her a judge.

Brisk. Pooh, my Lord, his voice goes for nothing.—I can't tell how to make him apprehend.—Take it t'other way. Suppoſe I ſay a witty thing to you?

Care. Then I ſhall be diſappointed indeed.

Mel. Let him alone, Brisk, he is obſtinately bent not to be inſtructed.

Brisk. I'm ſorry for him, the deuce take me.

Mel. Shall we go to the ladies, my Lord?

Lord Froth. With all my heart, methinks we are a ſolitude without 'em.

Mel. Or, what ſay you to another bottle of Champagne?

Lord Froth. O, for the univerſe, not a drop more I beſeech you. Oh intemperate! I have a fluſhing in my face already. [*Takes out a pocket glaſs and looks in it.*

Brisk. Let me ſee, let me ſee, my Lord, I broke my glaſs that was in the lid of my ſnuff-box. Hum! deuce take me, I have encouraged a pimple here too.

[*Takes the glaſs and looks.*

Lord Froth. Then you muſt mortify him with a patch; my wife ſhall ſupply you. Come, gentlemen, *allons*, here is company coming.

SCENE VI.

Lady TOUCHWOOD, *and* MASKWELL.

Lady Touch. I'LL hear no more.——Y'are falſe and ungrateful; come, I know you falſe.

Mask. I have been frail, I confeſs, Madam, for your Ladyſhip's ſervice.

Lady Touch. That I ſhould truſt a man, whom I had known betray his friend!

Mask. What friend have I betray'd? or to whom?

Lady Touch. Your fond friend Melleſont, and to me; can you deny it?

Mask. I do not.

Lady Touch. Have you not wrong'd my Lord, who has been a father to you in your wants, and given you being? Have you not wrong'd him in the higheſt manner, in his bed?

Mask. With your ladyſhip's help, and for your ſervice, as I told you before. I can't deny that neither.——Any thing more, Madam?

Lady Touch. More! audacious villain. O, what's more, is moſt my ſhame,———Have you not diſhonour'd me?

Mask. No, that I deny; for I never told in all my life: ſo that accuſation's anſwer'd; on to the next.

Lady Touch. Death, do you dally with my paſſion? inſolent devil! but have a care,———Provoke me not; for, by the eternal fire, you ſhall not eſcape my vengeance—Calm villain! how unconcern'd he ſtands, confeſſing treachery, and ingratitude! is there a vice more black! ——O I have excuſes, thouſands for my faults; fire in my temper, paſſions in my ſoul, apt to ev'ry provocation; oppreſſed at once with love, and with deſpair. But a ſe-

date, a thinking villain, whoſe black blood runs temperately bad, what excuſe can clear!

Mask. Will you be in temper, Madam? I would not talk not to be heard. I have been [*She walks about diſorder'd*] a very great rogue for your ſake, and you reproach me with it; I am ready to be a rogue ſtill, to do you ſervice; and you are flinging conſcience and honour in my face, to rebate my inclinations. How am I to behave myſelf? You know I am your creature, my life and fortune in your power; to diſoblige you, brings me certain ruin. Allow it, I would betray you; I would not be a traitor to myſelf: I don't pretend to honeſty, becauſe you know I am a raſcal: but I would convince you, from the neceſſity of my being firm to you.

Lady Touch. Neceſſity, impudence! can no gratitude incline you, no obligations touch you? have not my fortune, and my perſon, been ſubjected to your pleaſure? were you not in the nature of a ſervant, and have not I in effect made you lord of all, of me, and of my lord? where is that humble love, the languiſhing, that adoration, which once was paid me, and everlaſtingly engaged?

Mask. Fixt, rooted in my heart, whence nothing can remove 'em, yet you——

Lady Touch. Yet, what yet?

Mask. Nay, miſconceive me not, Madam, when I ſay I have had a generous and a faithful paſſion, which you had never favour'd, but through revenge and policy.

Lady Touch. Ha!

Mask. Look you, Madam, we are alone,——Pray contain yourſelf, and hear me. You know you lov'd your nephew, when I firſt ſigh'd for you; I quickly found it; an argument that I lov'd; for with that art you veil'd your paſſion, 'twas imperceptible to all but jealous eyes.

This diſcovery made me bold; I confeſs it; for by it, I thought you in my power. Your nephew's ſcorn of you, added to my hopes; I watch'd the occaſion, and took you, juſt repulſed by him, warm at once with love and indignation; your diſpoſition, my arguments, and happy opportunity, accompliſh'd my deſign; I preſt the yielding minute, and was bleſs'd. How I have lov'd you ſince, words have not ſhown, then how ſhould words expreſs?

Lady Touch. Well, mollifying devil!——And have I not met your love with forward fire?

Mask. Your zeal I grant was ardent, but miſplac'd; there was revenge in view; that woman's idol had defil'd the temple of the god, and love was made a mock-worſhip.—— —A ſon and heir would have edg'd young Mellefont upon the brink of ruin, and left him none but you to catch at for prevention.

Lady Touch. Again, provoke me! do you wind me like a larum, only to rouze my own ſtill'd ſoul for your diverſion? confuſion!

Mask. Nay, Madam, I'm gone, if you relapſe——What needs this? I ſay nothing but what you yourſelf, in open hours of love, have told me. Why ſhould you deny it? nay, how can you deny it? is not all this preſent heat owing to the ſame fire? do you not love him ſtill? how have I this day offended you, but in not breaking off this match with Cynthia? which ere to-morrow ſhall be done, ——————had you but patience.

Lady Touch. How, what ſaid you, Maskwell,——Another caprice to unwind my temper?

Mask. By Heav'n, no; I am your ſlave, the ſlave of all your pleaſures; and will not reſt 'till I have giv'n you peace, would you ſuffer me.

Lady Touch. O, Maskwell, in vain I do diſguiſe me from thee, thou know'ſt me, know'ſt the very inmoſt

windings and receſſes of my ſoul.——— Oh Mellefont! I burn; married to-morrow! deſpair ſtrikes me. Yet my ſoul knows I hate him too: let him but once be mine, and next immediate ruin ſeize him.

Mask. Compoſe yourſelf, you ſhall poſſeſs and ruin him too,——Will that pleaſe you?

Lady Touch. How, how? thou dear, thou precious villain, how?

Mask. You have already been tampering with my Lady Plyant?

Lady Touch. I have: ſhe is ready for any impreſſion I think fit.

Mask. She muſt be thoroughly perſuaded that Mellefont loves her.

Lady Touch. She is ſo credulous that way naturally, and likes him ſo well, that ſhe will believe it faſter than I can perſuade her. But I don't ſee what you can propoſe from ſuch a trifling deſign; for her firſt converſing with Mellefont will convince her of the contrary.

Mask. I know it——I don't depend upon it.———But it will prepare ſomething elſe; and gain us leiſure to lay a ſtronger plot: if I gain a little time, I ſhall not want contrivance.

One minute gives invention to deſtroy,
What, to rebuild, will a whole age employ.

End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Lady FROTH *and* CYNTHIA.

Cynth. INDEED, Madam! is it poſſible your ladyſhip could have been ſo much in love?

Lady Froth. I could not ſleep one wink for three weeks together.

Cynth. Prodigious! I wonder, want of ſleep, and ſo much love, and ſo much wit as your ladyſhip has, did not turn your brain.

Lady Froth. O my dear Cynthia, you muſt not rally your friend——But really, as you ſay, I wonder too,——But then I had a way.——For between you and I, I had whimſies and vapours, but I gave them vent.

Cynth. How pray, Madam?

Lady Froth. O I writ, writ abundantly,——Do you never write?

Cynth. Write, what?

Lady Froth. Songs, elegies, ſatires, encomiums, panegyrics, lampoons, plays, or heroic poems.

Cynth. O Lord, not I, Madam; I'm content to be a courteous reader.

Lady *Froth.* O inconſiſtent! in love, and not write! if my Lord and I had been both of your temper, we had never come together.——O bleſs me! what a ſad thing would that have been, if my Lord and I ſhould never have met!

Cynth Then neither my Lord nor you would ever have met with your match, on my conſcience.

Lady Froth. O' my conſcience no more we ſhould; thou ſay'ſt right——for ſure my Lord Froth is as fine a gentleman, and as much a man of quality! ah! nothing at all of the common air,————I think I may ſay he wants nothing, but a blue ribbon and a ſtar, to make him ſhine the very phoſphorus of our hemiſphere. Do you un-

derſtand thoſe two hard words? if you don't, I'll explain 'em to you.

Cynth. Yes, yes, Madam, I'm not ſo ignorant.——At leaſt I won't own it, to be troubled with your inſtructions. [*Aſide.*

Lady Froth. Nay, I beg your pardon; but being deriv'd from the Greek, I thought you might have eſcap'd the etymology.——But I'm the more amaz'd, to find you a woman of letters, and not write! bleſs me! how can Mellefont believe you love him?

Cynth. Why faith, Madam, he that won't take my word, ſhall never have it under my hand.

Lady Froth. I vow Mellefont's a pretty gentleman, but methinks he wants a manner.

Cynth. A manner! what's that, Madam?

Lady Froth. Some diſtinguiſhing quality; as for example, the Bel air or Brillant of Mr. Brisk; the ſolemnity, yet complaiſance of my Lord, or ſomething of his own that ſhould look a little *Je-ne-ſcay-quoyſh*; he is too much a mediocrity, in my mind.

Cynth. He does not indeed affect either pertneſs or formality; for which I like him: here he comes.

Lady Froth. And my Lord with him: pray obſerve the difference.

SCENE II.

[*To them*] *Lord* FROTH, MELLEFONT, *and* BRISK.

Cynth. IMpertinent creature! I could almoſt be angry with her now. [*Aſide.*

Lady Froth. My Lord, I have been telling Cynthia, how much I have been in love with you; I ſwear I have; I'm not aſham'd to own it now; ah! it makes my heart leap,

I vow I ſigh when I think on't: my dear Lord! ha, ha, ha, do you remember, my Lord?

Squeezes him by the hand, looks kindly on him, ſighs, and then laughs out.

Lord Froth. Pleaſant creature! perfectly well: ah! that look, ay, there it is; who could reſiſt! 'twas ſo my heart was made a captive firſt, and ever ſince 't has been in love with happy ſlavery.

Lady Froth. O that tongue, that dear deceitful tongue! that charming ſoftneſs in your mien and your expreſſion, and then your bow! good my Lord, bow as you did when I gave you my picture; here, ſuppoſe this my picture—

[*Gives him a pocket-glaſs.*

Pray mind my Lord; ah! he bows charmingly; nay, my Lord, you ſhan't kiſs it ſo much; I ſhall grow jealous, I vow now.

[*He bows profoundly low, then kiſſes the glaſs.*

Lord Froth. I ſaw myſelf there, and kiſs'd it for your ſake.

Lady Froth. Ah! gallantry to the laſt degree———Mr. Brisk, you're a judge; was ever any thing ſo well bred as my Lord?

Brisk. Never any thing; but your ladyſhip, let me periſh.

Lady Froth. O prettily turn'd again; let me die but you have a great deal of wit. Mr. Melleſont, don't you think Mr. Brisk has a world of wit?

Mel. O, yes, Madam.

Brisk. O dear, Madam———

Lady Froth. An infinite deal!

Brisk. O heav'ns! Madam——

Lady Froth. More wit than any body.

Brisk. I'm everlaſtingly your humble ſervant, deuce take me, Madam.

Lord Froth. Don't you think us a happy couple?

Cynth. I vow, my Lord, I think you the happieſt couple in the world; for you're not only happy in one another, and when you are together, but happy in yourſelves, and by yourſelves.

Lord Froth. I hope Mellefont will make a good huſband too.

Cynth. 'Tis my intereſt to believe he will, my Lord.

Lord Froth. D'ye think he'll love you as well as I do my wife? I'm afraid not.

Cynth. I believe he'll love me better.

Lord Froth. Heav'ns! that can never be; but why do you think ſo?

Cynth. Becauſe he has not ſo much reaſon to be fond of himſelf.

Lord Froth. O your humble ſervant for that, dear Madam; well, Mellefont, you'll be a happy creature.

Mel. Ay, my Lord, I ſhall have the ſame reaſon for my happineſs that your lordſhip has, I ſhall think myſelf happy.

Lord Froth. Ah, that's all.

Brisk. [*To Lady Froth*] Your ladyſhip is in the right; but I'gad I'm wholly turn'd into ſatire. I confeſs I write but ſeldom, but when I do———keen *Iambicks*, I'gad. But my Lord was telling me, your ladyſhip has made an eſſay toward an heroic poem.

Lady Froth. Did my Lord tell you? yes I vow, and the ſubject is my Lord's love to me. And what do you think I call it? I dare ſwear you won't gueſs———*The Sillabub*, ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Becauſe my Lord's title's *Froth*, I'gad, ha, ha, ha, deuce take me very *a propos* and ſurprizing, ha, ha, ha.

Lady Froth. He, ay, is not it?——And then I call my Lord *Spumoſo*; and myſelf, what d'ye think I call myſelf?

Brisk. Lætilla, may be.—'gad I cannot tell.

Lady Froth. Biddy, that's all; juſt my own name.

Brisk. Biddy! I'gad very pretty—— Deuce take me if your ladyſhip has not the art of ſurprizing the moſt naturally in the world,——I hope you'll make me happy in communicating the poem.

Lady Froth. O, you muſt be my confident, I muſt ask your advice.

Brisk. I'm your humble ſervant, let me periſh,———I preſume your ladyſhip has read *Boſſu?*

Lady Froth. O yes, and *Rapine*, and *Dacier* upon *Ariſtotle* and *Horace*——My Lord, you muſt not be jealous, I'm communicating all to Mr. Brisk.

Lord Froth. No, no, I'll allow Mr. Brisk; have you nothing about you to ſhew him, my dear?

Lady Froth. Yes, I believe I have.——Mr. Brisk, come, will you go into the next room? and there I'll ſhew you what I have.

Lord Froth. I'll walk a turn in the garden, and come to you.

SCENE III.

MELLEFONT, CYNTHIA.

Mel. YOU'RE thoughtful, Cynthia?

Cynth. I'm thinking, tho' marriage makes man and wife one fleſh, it leaves 'em ſtill two fools; and they become more conſpicuous by ſetting off one another.

Mel. That's only when two fools meet, and their follies are oppos'd.

Cynth. Nay, I have known two wits meet, and by the oppoſition of their wit, render themſelves as ridiculous as fools. 'Tis an odd game we're going to play at: what think you of drawing ſtakes, and giving over in time?

Mel. No, hang't, that's not endeavouring to win, becauſe 'tis poſſible we may loſe; ſince we have ſhuffled and cut, let's e'en turn up trump now.

Cynth. Then I find it's like cards, if either of us have a good hand it is an accident of fortune.

Mel. No, marriage is rather like a game at bowls, fortune indeed makes the match, and the two neareſt, and ſometimes the two fartheſt are together, but the game depends entirely upon judgment.

Cynth. Still it is a game, and conſequently one of us muſt be a loſer.

Mel. Not at all; only a friendly trial of skill, and the winnings to be laid out in an entertainment.——What's here, the muſic? Oh, my Lord has promiſed the company a new ſong, we'll get 'em to give it us by the way. [*Muſicians croſſing the ſtage.*] Pray let us have the favour of you, to practiſe the ſong, before the company hear it.

SONG.

I.

Cynthia frowns whene'er I woe her,
Yet ſhe's vext if I give over;
Much ſhe fears I ſhould undo her,
But much more to loſe her lover:
Thus, in doubting, ſhe refuſes;
And not winning, thus ſhe loſes.

II.

Pr'ythee Cynthia look behind you,
Age and wrinkles will o'ertake you;
Then too late deſire will find you,
When the power muſt forſake you:
Think, O think o'th' ſad condition,
To be paſt, yet wiſh fruition.

Mel. You ſhall have my thanks below.

[*To the muſic, they go out.*

SCENE IV.

[*To them*] *Sir* PAUL PLYANT *and Lady* PLYANT.

Sir Paul Plyant. GADS bud! I am provok'd into a fermentation, as my Lady Froth ſays; was ever the like read of in Story?

Lady Plyant. Sir Paul have patience, let me alone to rattle him up.

Sir P. Plyant. Pray your ladyſhip give me leave to be angry—I'll rattle him up I warrant you, I'll firk him with a *Certiorari.*

Lady Plyant. You firk him! I'll firk him myſelf; pray Sir Paul hold you contented.

Cynth. Bleſs me, what makes my father in ſuch a paſſion!—I never ſaw him thus before.

Sir P. Plyant. Hold yourſelf contented, my Lady Plyant,—I find paſſion coming upon me by inflation, and I cannot ſubmit as formerly, therefore give way.

Lady Plyant. How now! will you be pleaſed to retire, and——

Sir P. Plyant. No marry will I not be pleaſed, I am pleaſed to be angry, that's my pleaſure at this time.

Mel. What can this mean!

Lady Plyant. Gads my life, the man's diſtracted; why how now, who are you? what am I? ſlidikins, can't I govern you? what did I marry you for? am I not to be abſolute and uncontroulable? is it fit a woman of my ſpirit, and conduct, ſhould be contradicted in a matter of this concern?

Sir P. Plyant. It concerns me, and only me;—Beſides, I'm not to be govern'd at all times. When I am in tran-

quility, my Lady Plyant ſhall command Sir Paul; but when I am provok'd to fury, I cannot incorporate with patience and reaſon,——as ſoon may tygers match with tygers, lambs with lambs, and every creature couple with its foe, as the Poet ſays.——

Lady Plyant. He's hot-headed ſtill! 'tis in vain to talk to you; but remember I have a curtain-lecture for you, you diſobedient headſtrong brute.

Sir P. Plyant. No, 'tis becauſe I won't be a brute, and have my head fortify'd, that I am thus exaſperated,—— But I will protect my honour, and yonder is the violator of my fame.

Lady Plyant. 'Tis my honour that is concern'd, and the violation was intended to me. Your honour! you have none but what is in my keeping, and I can diſpoſe of it when I pleaſe———therefore don't provoke me.

Sir P. Plyant. Hum, gads-bud ſhe ſays true———Well, my Lady, march on, I will fight under you then: I am convinced, as far as paſſion will permit.

L. Plyant and Sir Paul come up to Mellefont.

Lady Plyant. Inhuman and treacherous.——

Sir P. Plyant. Thou ſerpent and firſt tempter of womankind.———

Cynth. Bleſs me! Sir: Madam; what mean you?

Sir P. Plyant. Thy, Thy, come away *Thy,* touch him not, come hither girl, go not near him, there's nothing but deceit about him; ſnakes are in his peruke, and the crocodile of Nilus in his belly, he will eat thee up alive.

Lady Plyant. Diſhonourable, impudent creature!

Mel. For heav'ns ſake, Madam, to whom do you direct this language!

Lady Plyant. Have I behav'd myſelf with all the decorum and nicety, befitting the perſon of Sir Paul's wife? have I preſerv'd my honour as it were in a ſnow-houſe

for theſe three years paſt? have I been white and unſully'd even by Sir Paul himſelf?

Sir P. Plyant. Nay, ſhe has been an invincible wife, even to me, that's the truth on't.

Lady Plyant. Have I, I ſay, preſerv'd myſelf, like a fair ſheet of paper, for you to make a blot upon?——

Sir P. Plyant. And ſhe ſhall make a ſmile with any woman in England.

Mel. I am ſo amaz'd, I know not what to ſay.

Sir P. Plyant. Do you think my daughter, this pretty creature; gads-bud ſhe's a wife for a cherubim! do you think her fit for nothing but to be a ſtalking horſe, to hand before you, while you take aim at my wife? gads-bud I was never angry before in my life, and I'll never be appeas'd again.

Mel. Hell and damnation! this is my aunt; ſuch malice can be engendred no where elſe. [*Aſide.*

Lady Plyant. Sir Paul, take Cynthia from his ſight; leave me to ſtrike him with the remorſe of his intended crime.

Cynth. Pray, Sir, ſtay, hear him, I dare affirm he's innocent.

Sir P. Plyant. Innocent! why hark'ye, come hither *Thy*, hark'ye, I had it from his aunt, my ſiſter Touchwood, ————gads-bud he does not care a farthing for any thing of thee, but thy portion, why, he's in love with my wife; he would have tantaliz'd thee, and made a cuckold of thy poor father,———and that would certainly have broke my heart——I'm ſure, if ever I ſhould have horns, they would kill me; they would never come kindly, I ſhould die of 'em, like a child that was cutting his teeth ——I ſhould indeed, *Thy*,———therefore come away; but providence has prevented all, therefore come away, when I bid you.

Cynth. I muſt obey.

SCENE V.

Lady PLYANT, MELLEFONT.

Lady *Plyant.* O, Such a thing! the impiety of it ſtartles me———to wrong ſo good, ſo fair a creature, and one that loves you tenderly—'tis a barbarity of barbarities, and nothing could be guilty of it.—

Mel. But the greateſt villain imagination can form, I grant it; and next to the villany of ſuch a fact, is the villany of aſperſing me with the guilt. How? which way was I to wrong her? for yet I underſtand you not.

Lady *Plyant.* Why, gads my life, couſin Mellefont, you cannot be ſo peremptory as to deny it; when I tax you with it to your face; for now Sir Paul's gone, you are *Corum Nobus.*

Mel. By Heav'n, I love her more than life, or——

Lady *Plyant.* Fiddle, faddle, don't tell me of this and that, and ev'ry thing in the world, but give me mathemacular demonſtration, anſwer me directly— But I have not patience———Oh! the impiety of it, as I was ſaying, and the unparallell'd wickedneſs! O merciful father! how could you think to reverſe nature ſo, to make the daughter the means of procuring the mother?

Mel. The daughter to procure the mother!

Lady *Plyant.* Ay, for tho' I am not Cynthia's own mother, I am her father's wife; and that's near enough to make it inceſt.

Mel. Inceſt! O my precious aunt, and the devil in conjunction. [*Aſide.*

Lady *Plyant.* O reflect upon the horror of that, and then the guilt of deceiving every body; marrying the daughter, only to make a cuckold of the father; and then ſe-

ducing me, debauching my purity, and perverting me from the road of virtue, in which I have trod thus long, and never made one trip, not one *faux pas*; O conſider it, what would you have to anſwer for, if you ſhould provoke me to frailty? alas! humanity is feeble, heav'n knows! very feeble, and unable to ſupport itſelf.

Mel. Where am I? Is it day? and am I awake? Madam———

Lady *Plyant.* And no body knows how circumſtances may happen together,——to my thinking, now I could reſiſt the ſtrongeſt temptation,——but yet I know, it is impoſſible for me to know whether I could or not, there's no certainty in the things of this life.

Mel. Madam, pray give me leave to ask you one queſtion.———

Lady *Plyant.* O Lord, ask me the queſtion! I'll ſwear I'll refuſe it; I ſwear I'll deny it——therefore don't ask me, nay you ſhan't ask me, I ſwear I'll deny it. O Gemini, you have brought all the blood into my face; I warrant I am as red as a turky-cock; O fie, couſin Mellefont!

Mel. Nay, Madam, hear me; I mean——

Lady *Plyant.* Hear you? no, no; I'll deny you firſt, and hear you afterwards. For one does not know how one's mind may change upon hearing———Hearing is one of the ſenſes, and all the ſenſes are fallible; I wont truſt my honour, I aſſure you; my honour is infallible and uncomatible.

Mel. For Heav'n's ſake, Madam,———

Lady *Plyant.* O name it no more—Bleſs me, how can you talk of Heav'n! and have ſo much wickedneſs in your heart? May be you don't think it a ſin—They ſay ſome of you gentlemen don't think it a ſin,—May be it is no ſin to them that don't think it ſo; indeed, if I did not

think it a ſin—But ſtill my honour, if it were no ſin,—But then to marry my daughter, for the conveniency of frequent opportunities,———I'll never conſent to that, as ſure as can be, I'll break the match.

Mel. Death and amazement,———Madam, upon my knees——

L. *Plyant.* Nay, nay, riſe up, come you ſhall ſee my good nature. I know love is powerful, and no body can help his paſſion: 'tis not your fault; nor I ſwear it is not mine,———How can I help it, if I have charms? and how can you help it, if you are made a captive? I ſwear it is pity it ſhould be a fault,——But my honour,——well, but your honour too——but the ſin!——well but the neceſſity———O Lord, here's ſome body coming, I dare not ſtay. Well, you muſt conſider of your crime; and ſtrive as much as can be againſt it,——ſtrive, be ſure ———But don't be melancholic, don't deſpair,———But never think that I'll grant you any thing; O Lord, no; ———but be ſure you lay aſide all thoughts of the marriage, for tho' I know you don't love Cynthia, only as a blind for your paſſion to me; yet it will make me jealous, ——O Lord, what did I ſay? jealous! no, no, I can't be jealous, for I muſt not love you,—therefore don't hope,—But don't deſpair neither,—O, they're coming, I muſt fly.

SCENE VI.

MELLEFONT *alone.*

MELLEFONT (*after a pauſe.*)

SO then,—ſpight of my care and foreſight, I am caught, caught in my ſecurity,———Yet this was but a ſhallow artifice, unworthy of my Matchiavilian aunt: there muſt be more behind, this is but the firſt flaſh, the priming

of her engine; deſtruction follows hard, if not moſt preſently prevented.

SCENE VII.

[*To him*] MASKWELL.

MELLEFONT.

MAskwell, welcome, thy preſence is a view of land, appearing to my ſhipwrack'd hopes: the witch has rais'd the ſtorm, and her miniſters have done their work; you ſee the veſſels are parted.

Mask. I know it; I met Sir Paul towing away Cynthia: come, trouble not your head, I'll join you together e'er to-morrow morning, or drown between you in the attempt.

Mel. There's comfort in a hand ſtretch'd out, to one that's ſinking, tho' ne'er ſo far off.

Mask. No ſinking, nor no danger,—Come, cheer up; why you don't know, that while I plead for you, your aunt has given me a retaining fee;—— Nay, I am your greateſt enemy, and ſhe does but journey-work under me.

Mel. Ha? how's this?

Mask. What d'ye think of my being employ'd in the execution of all her plots? ha, ha, ha, by heav'n 'tis true; I have undertaken to break the match, I have undertaken to make your uncle diſinherit you, to get you turn'd out of doors; and to——— ha, ha, ha, I can't tell you for laughing,———Oh ſhe has open'd her heart to me—— I am to turn you a grazing, and to—Ha, ha, ha, marry Cynthia myſelf; there's a plot for you.

Mel. Ha! O ſee, I ſee my riſing ſun! light breaks thro' clouds upon me, and I ſhall live in day——O my Maskwell! how ſhall I thank or praiſe thee; thou haſt

outwitted woman.——— But tell me, how couldſt thou thus get into her confidence? —— Ha! how? but was it her contrivance to perſwade my Lady Plyant to this extravagant belief?

Mask. It was, and to tell you the truth, I encourag'd it for your diverſion: tho' it made you a little uneaſy for the preſent, yet the reflection of it muſt needs be entertaining,——I warrant ſhe was very violent at firſt.

Mel. Ha, ha, ha, ay, a very fury; but I was moſt afraid of her violence at laſt,—If you had not come as you did; I don't know what ſhe might have attempted.

Mask. Ha, ha, ha, I know her temper.———Well, you muſt know then, that all my contrivances were but bubbles; 'till at laſt I pretended to have been long ſecretly in love with Cynthia; that did my buſineſs; that convinc'd your aunt, I might be truſted; ſince it was as much my intereſt as her's to break the match: then, ſhe thought my jealouſy might qualify me to aſſiſt her in her revenge. And, in ſhort, in that belief, told me the ſecrets of her heart. At length we made this agreement, if I accompliſh her deſigns (as I told you before) ſhe has engag'd to put Cynthia with all her fortune into my power.

Mel. She is moſt gracious in her favour,——Well, and dear Jack, how haſt thou contriv'd?

Mask. I would not have you ſtay to hear it now; for I don't know, but ſhe may come this way; I am to meet her anon; after that, I'll tell you the whole matter; be here in this gallery an hour hence, by that time I imagine our conſultation may be over.

Mel. I will; 'till then ſucceſs attend thee.

SCENE VIII.

MASKWELL *alone.*

'TILL then, ſucceſs will attend me; for when I meet you, I meet the only obſtacle to my fortune. Cynthia, let thy beauty gild my crimes; and whatſoever I commit of treachery or deceit, ſhall be imputed to me as a merit—— Treachery, what treachery? love cancels all the bonds of friendſhip, and ſets men right upon their firſt foundations.

Duty to kings, piety to parents, gratitude to benefactors, and fidelity to friends, are different and particular ties: but the name of Rival cuts 'em all aſunder, and is a general acquittance——Rival is equal, and love, like death, an univerſal leveller of mankind. Ha! but is there not ſuch a thing as honeſty? Yes, and whoſoever has it about him, bears an enemy in his breaſt: for your honeſt man, as I take it, is that nice, ſcrupulous, conſcientious perſon, who will cheat no body but himſelf; ſuch another coxcomb, as your wiſe man, who is too hard for all the world, and will be made a fool of by no body, but himſelf: ha, ha, ha. Well, for wiſdom and honeſty, give me cunning and hypocriſy; oh, 'tis ſuch a pleaſure, to angle for fair-fac'd fools! then that hungry gudgeon Credulity, will bite at any thing—Why, let me ſee, I have the ſame face, the ſame words and accents, when I ſpeak what I do think; and when I ſpeak what I do not think ——the very ſame—and dear Diſſimulation is the only art, not to be known from nature.

Why will mankind be fools, and be deceiv'd?
And why are friends and lovers oaths believ'd?
When, each, who ſearches ſtrictly his own mind,
May ſo much fraud and power of baſeneſs find.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Lord TOUCHWOOD, *and Lady* TOUCHWOOD.

Lady TOUCHWOOD.

MY Lord, can you blame my brother Plyant, if he refuſe his daughter upon this provocation? the contract's void by this unheard of impiety.

Lord *Touch.* I don't believe it true; he has better principles————Pho, 'tis nonſenſe. Come, come, I know my Lady Plyant has a large eye, and would centre every thing in her own circle: 'tis not the firſt time ſhe has miſtaken reſpect for love, and made Sir Paul jealous of the civility of an undeſigning perſon, the better to beſpeak his ſecurity in her unfeigned pleaſures.

Lady *Touch.* You cenſure hardly, my Lord; my ſiſter's honour is very well known.

Lord *Touch.* Yes, I believe I know ſome that have been familiarly acquainted with it. This is a little trick wrought by ſome pitiful contriver, envious of my nephew's merit.

Lady *Touch.* Nay, my Lord, it may be ſo, and I hope it will be found ſo: but that will require ſome time; for in ſuch a caſe as this, demonſtration is neceſſary.

Lord *Touch.* There ſhould have been demonſtration of the contrary too, before it had been believ'd———

Lady *Touch.* So I ſuppoſe there was.

Lord *Touch.* How? where? when?

Lady *Touch.* That I can't tell; nay I don't ſay there was——I am willing to believe as favourably of my nephew as I can.

Lord *Touch.* I don't know that. [*Half Aſide.*

Lady *Touch.* How? don't you believe that, ſay you, my Lord?

Lord *Touch.* No, I don't ſay ſo————I confeſs I am troubled to find you ſo cold in his defence.

Lady *Touch.* His defence! bleſs me, would you have me defend an ill thing?

Lord *Touch.* You believe it then?

Lady *Touch.* I don't know; I am very unwilling to ſpeak my thoughts in any thing that may be to my couſin's diſadvantage; beſides, I find, my lord, you are prepared to receive an ill impreſſion from any opinion of mine which is not conſenting with your own: but ſince I am like to be ſuſpected in the end, and 'tis a pain any longer to diſſemble, I own it to you; in ſhort I do believe it, nay, and can believe any thing worſe, if it were laid to his charge———Don't ask me my reaſons, my Lord, for they are not fit to be told you.

Lord *Touch.* I'm amaz'd, here muſt be ſomething more than ordinary in this. [*Aſide.*] Not fit to be told me, Madam? You can have no intereſts, wherein I am not concern'd, and conſequently the ſame reaſons ought to be convincing to me, which create your ſatisfaction or diſquiet.

Lady *Touch.* But thoſe which cauſe my diſquiet, I am willing to have remote from your hearing. Good my Lord, don't preſs me.

Lord *Touch.* Don't oblige me to preſs you.

Lady *Touch.* Whatever it was, 'tis paſt: and that is better to be unknown which cannot be prevented; therefore let me beg you to reſt ſatisfy'd————

Lord *Touch.* When you have told me, I will——

Lady *Touch.* You won't.

Lord *Touch.* By my life, my dear, I will.

Lady *Touch.* What if you can't.

Lord *Touch.* How? then I muſt know, nay I will: no

more trifling——I charge you tell me—— By all our mutual peace to come; upon your duty———

Lady *Touch.* Nay, my lord, you need ſay no more, to make me lay my heart before you, but don't be thus tranſported; compoſe yourſelf: it is not of concern, to make you loſe one minute's temper. 'Tis not indeed, my dear. Nay, by this kiſs you ſhan't be angry. O Lord, I wiſh I had not told you any thing.———Indeed, my Lord, you have frighted me. Nay, look pleas'd, I'll tell you.

Lord *Touch.* Well, well.

Lady *Touch.* Nay, but will you be calm———indeed it's nothing but——

Lord *Touch.* But what?

Lady *Touch.* But will you promiſe me not to be angry ——Nay you muſt—not to be angry with Melleſont—I dare ſwear he's ſorry—and were it to do again, would not———

Lord *Touch.* Sorry, for what? death, you rack me with delay.

Lady *Touch.* Nay, no great matter, only———Well I have your promiſe———Pho, why nothing, only your nephew had a mind to amuſe himſelf, ſometimes with a little gallantry towards me. Nay, I can't think he meant any thing ſeriouſly, but methought it look'd odly.

Lord *Touch.* Confuſion and hell, what do I hear!

Lady *Touch.* Or, may be, he thought he was not enough a-kin to me, upon your account, and had a mind to create a nearer relation on his own; a lover you know, my Lord ——Ha, ha, ha. Well, but that's all—Now you have it; well, remember your promiſe, my Lord, and don't take any notice of it to him.

Lord *Touch.* No, no,———damnation!

Lady *Touch.* Nay, I ſwear you muſt not———A little

harmleſs mirth——Only miſplac'd, that's all——But if it were more, 'tis over now, and all's well. For my part, I have forgot it; and ſo has he, I hope——for I have not heard any thing from him theſe two days.

Lord *Touch.* Theſe two days! is it ſo freſh? unnatural villain! death, I'll have him ſtripp'd and turn'd naked out of my doors this moment, and let him rot and periſh, inceſtuous brute!

Lady *Touch.* O for Heaven's ſake, my Lord, you'll ruin me if you take ſuch publick notice of it, it will be a town-talk: conſider your own and my honour—nay, I told you you would not be ſatisfied when you knew it.

Lord *Touch.* Before I've done, I will be ſatisfy'd. Ungrateful monſter! how long?

Lady *Touch.* Lord, I don't know: I wiſh my lips had grown together when I told you——Almoſt a twelvemonth——Nay, I won't tell you any more, 'till you are yourſelf. Pray, my Lord, don't let the company ſee you in this diſorder——Yet I confeſs, I can't blame you; for I think I was never ſo ſurpriz'd in my life——Who would have thought my nephew could have ſo miſconſtrued my kindneſs——But will you go into your cloſet, and recover your temper? I'll make an excuſe of ſudden buſineſs to the company, and come to you. Pray, good dear my Lord, let me beg you do now: I'll come immediately, and tell you all; will you, my Lord?

Lord *Touch.* I will--I am mute with wonder.

Lady *Touch.* Well but go now, here's ſome body coming.

Lord *Touch.* Well, I go—You won't ſtay, for I would hear more of this.

Lady *Touch.* I follow inſtantly——So.

SCENE II.

Lady TOUCHWOOD, MASKWELL.

MASKWELL.

THIS was a maſter-piece, and did not need my help ——tho' I ſtood ready for a cue to come in and confirm all, had there been occaſion.

Lady *Touch.* Have you ſeen Mellefont?

Mask. I have; and am to meet him here about this time.

Lady *Touch.* How does he bear his diſappointment?

Mask. Secure in my aſſiſtance, he ſeemed not much afflicted, but rather laugh'd at the ſhallow artifice, which ſo little time muſt of neceſſity diſcover. Yet he is apprehenſive of ſome farther deſign of your's, and has engaged me to watch you. I believe he will hardly be able to prevent your plot, yet I would have you uſe caution and expedition.

Lady *Touch.* Expedition indeed; for all we do, muſt be perform'd in the remaining part of this evening, and before the company break up; leſt my Lord ſhould cool, and have an opportunity to talk with him privately—My Lord muſt not ſee him again.

Mask. By no means; therefore you muſt aggravate my Lord's diſpleaſure to a degree that will admit of no conference with him.—What think you of mentioning me?

Lady *Touch.* How?

Mask. To my Lord, as having been privy to Mellefont's deſign upon you, but ſtill uſing my utmoſt endeavours to diſſuade him: tho' my friendſhip and love to him has made me conceal it; yet you muſt ſay, I threat-

ned the next time he attempted any thing of that kind, to diſcover it to my Lord.

Lady *Touch.* To what end is this?

Mask. It will confirm my Lord's opinion of my honour and honeſty, and create in him a new confidence in me, which (ſhould this deſign miſcarry) will be neceſſary to the forming another plot that I have in my head—To cheat you as well as the reſt. [*Aſide.*

Lady *Touch.* I'll do it———I'll tell him you hindred him once from forcing me.

Mask. Excellent! Your Ladyſhip has a moſt improving fancy. You had beſt go to my Lord, keep him as long as you can in his cloſet, and I doubt not but you will mould him to what you pleaſe; your gueſts are ſo engaged in their own follies and intrigues, they'll miſs neither of you.

Lady *Touch.* When ſhall we meet?——— At eight this evening in my chamber; there rejoice at our ſucceſs, and toy away an hour in mirth.

Mask. I will not fail.

SCENE III.

MASKWELL *alone.*

I Know what ſhe means by toying away an hour well enough. Pox I have loſt all appetite to her; yet ſhe's a fine woman, and I lov'd her once. But I don't know, ſince I have been in a great meaſure kept by her, the caſe is alter'd; what was my pleaſure is become my duty: And I have as little ſtomach to her now as if I were her husband. Should ſhe ſmoak my deſign upon Cynthia, I were in a fine pickle. She has a damn'd penetrating head, and knows how to interpret a coldneſs the right way; therefore I muſt diſſemble ardour and eceſtaſie, that's reſolv'd: how eaſily and pleaſantly is that diſſembled before

fruition! pox on't, that a man can't drink without quenching his thirſt. Ha! yonder comes Mellefont thoughtful. Let me think: meet her at eight———hum——ha! by heav'n I have it——if I can ſpeak to my Lord before——was it my brain or providence? no matter which——I will deceive 'em all, and yet ſecure myſelf: 'twas a lucky thought! well, this double-dealing is a jewel.
Here he comes: now for me.——

[*Maskwell pretending not to ſee him, walks by him, and ſpeaks as it were to himſelf.*

SCENE IV.

[*To him*] MELLEFONT *muſing.*

MELLEFONT.

MERCY on us! what will the wickedneſs of this world come to?

Mel. How now, Jack? what, ſo full of contemplation that you run over!

Mask. I'm glad you're come, for I could not contain myſelf any longer: and was juſt going to give vent to a ſecret, which no body but you ought to drink down.——Your aunt's juſt gone from hence.

Mel. And having truſted thee with the ſecrets of her ſoul, thou art villainouſly bent to diſcover 'em all to me, ha?

Mask. I'm afraid my frailty leans that way——But I don't know whether I can in honour diſcover 'em all.

Mel. All, all, man: what, you may in honour betray her as far as ſhe betrays herſelf. No tragical deſign upon my perſon, I hope?

Mask. No, but it's a comical deſign upon mine.

Mel. What doſt thou mean?

Mask. Liſten and be dumb; we have been bargaining about the rate of your ruin———

Mel. Like any two guardians to an orphan heireſs—Well.

Mask. And whereas pleaſure is generally paid with miſchief, what miſchief I do is to be paid with pleaſure.

Mel. So when you've ſwallow'd the potion, you ſweeten your mouth with a plumb.

Mask. You are merry, Sir, but I ſhall probe your conſtitution. In ſhort, the price of your baniſhment is to be paid with the perſon of———

Mel. Of Cynthia, and her fortune—Why, you forget; you told me this before.

Mask. No, no——So far you are right; and I am, as an earneſt of that bargain, to have full and free poſſeſſion of the perſon of—your aunt.

Mel. Ha!———Pho, you trifle.

Mask. By this light, I'm ſerious; all raillery apart—I knew 'twould ſtun you: this evening at eight ſhe will receive me in her bed-chamber.

Mel. Hell and the devil! is ſhe abandon'd of all grace—Why the woman is poſſeſs'd——

Mask. Well, will you go in my ſtead?

Mel. By heav'n into a hot furnace ſooner.

Mask. No, you would not—It would not be ſo convenient, as I can order matters.

Mel. What d'ye mean!

Mask. Mean? not to diſappoint the lady, I aſſure you—Ha, ha, ha, how gravely he looks——Come, come, I won't perplex you. 'Tis the only thing that providence could have contriv'd to make me capable of ſerving you, either to my inclination or your own neceſſity.

Mel. How, how, for heav'n's ſake, dear Maskwell?

Mask. Why thus—I'll go according to appointment;

you ſhall have notice at the critical minute to come and ſurpriſe your aunt and me together: counterfeit a rage againſt me, and I'll make my eſcape through the private paſſage from her chamber, which I'll take care to leave open: 'twill be hard, if then you can't bring her to any conditions. For this diſcovery will diſarm her of all defence, and leave her entirely at your mercy: nay, ſhe muſt ever after be in awe of you.

Mel. Let me adore thee, my better Genius! by heav'n I think it is not in the power of fate to diſappoint my hopes—My hopes! my certainty.

Mask. Well, I'll meet you here, within a quarter of eight, and give you notice.

Mel. Good fortune ever go along with thee.

SCENE V.

MELLEFONT, CARELESS.

CARELESS.

MEllefont, get out o' th' way; my Lady Plyant's coming, and I ſhall never ſucceed while thou art in ſight—Tho' ſhe begins to tack about; but I made love a great while to no purpoſe.

Mel. Why, what's the matter? ſhe's convinc'd that I don't care for her.

Care. I can't get an anſwer from her, that does not begin with her honour, or her virtue, her religion, or ſome ſuch cant. Then ſhe has told me the whole hiſtory of Sir Paul's nine year's courtſhip; how he has lain for whole nights together upon the ſtairs, before her chamber-door; and that the firſt favour he receiv'd from her, was a piece of an old ſcarlet petticoat for a ſtomacher; which, ſince the day of his marriage, he has, out of a piece of gallantry,

converted into a night-cap, and wears it ſtill with much ſolemnity on his anniverſary wedding-night.

Mel. That I have ſeen, with the ceremony thereunto belonging——For on that night he creeps in at the bed's feet like a gull'd Baſſa that has marry'd a relation of the Grand Signior, and that night he has his arms at liberty. Did not ſhe tell you at what a diſtance ſhe keeps him? he has confeſs'd to me, that but at ſome certain times, that is, I ſuppoſe, when ſhe apprehends being with child, he never has the privilege of uſing the familiarity of a huſband with a wife. He was once given to ſcrambling with his hands, and ſprawling in his ſleep; and ever ſince ſhe has him ſwaddled up in blankets, and his hands and feet ſwath'd down, and ſo put to bed; and there he lies with a great beard, like a Ruſſian bear upon a drift of ſnow. You are very great with him, I wonder he never told you his grievances; he will, I warrant you.

Care. Exceſſively fooliſh!——But that which gives me moſt hopes of her, is her telling me of the many temptations ſhe has reſiſted.

Mel. Nay, then you have her; for a woman's bragging to a man that ſhe has overcome temptations, is an argument that they were weakly offer'd, and a challenge to him to engage her more irreſiſtibly. 'Tis only an inhancing the price of the commodity, by telling you how many cuſtomers have underbid her.

Care. Nay, I don't deſpair——But ſtill ſhe has a grudging to you——I talk'd to her t'other night at my Lord Froth's maſquerade, when I'm ſatisfied ſhe knew me, and I had no reaſon to complain of my reception; but I find women are not the ſame bare-fac'd as in masks,——and a vizor diſguiſes their inclinations as much as their faces.

Mel. 'Tis a miſtake, for women may moſt properly be ſaid to be unmask'd when they wear vizors; for that ſe-

cures them from bluſhing, and being out of countenance, and next to being in the dark, or alone, they are moſt truly themſelves in a vizor mask. Here they come, I'll leave you. Ply her cloſe, and by and by clap a *billet-deux* into her hand: for a woman never thinks a man truly in love with her, 'till he has been fool enough to think of her out of her ſight, and to loſe ſo much time as to write to her.

SCENE VI.

CARELESS, *Sir* PAUL *and Lady* PLYANT.

Sir PAUL PLYANT.

SHAN'T we diſturb your meditation, Mr. Careleſs: you wou'd be private?

Care. You bring that along with you, Sir Paul, that ſhall be always welcome to my privacy.

Sir *P. Plyant.* O, ſweet Sir, you load your humble ſervants, both me and my wife, with continual favours.

Lady *Plyant.* Sir Paul, what a phraſe was there? you will be making anſwers, and taking that upon you, which ought to lie upon me: that you ſhould have ſo little breeding to think Mr. Careleſs did not apply himſelf to me. Pray what have you to entertain any body's privacy? I ſwear and declare in the face of the world I'm ready to bluſh for your ignorance.

Sir *P. Plyant.* I acquieſce, my lady; but don't ſnub ſo loud. [*Aſide to her.*

Lady *Plyant.* Mr. Careleſs, if a perſon that is wholly illiterate might be ſuppoſed to be capable of being qualified to make a ſuitable return to thoſe obligations which you are pleaſed to confer upon one that is wholly incapable of being qualify'd in all thoſe circumſtances, I'm

ſure I ſhou'd rather attempt it than any thing in the world, [*Curt'ſies*] for I'm ſure there's nothing in the world that I would rather. [*Curt'ſies*] But I know Mr. Careleſs is ſo great a critick, and ſo fine a gentleman, that it is impoſſible for me——

Care. O heav'ns! Madam, you confound me.

Sir *P. Plyant.* Gad's-bud, ſhe's a fine perſon——

Lady *Plyant.* O Lord! Sir, pardon me. We women have not thoſe advantages: I know my own imperfections——But at the ſame time you muſt give me leave to declare in the face of the world, that no body is more ſenſible of favours and things: for with the reſerve of my honour, I aſſure you, Mr. Careleſs, I don't know any thing in the world I would refuſe to a perſon ſo meritorious—You'll pardon my want of expreſſion.——

Care. O your Ladyſhip is abounding in all excellence, particularly that of phraſe.

Lady *Plyant.* You are ſo obliging, Sir.

Care. Your Ladyſhip is ſo charming.

Sir *P. Plyant.* So, now, now; now, my Lady.

Lady *Plyant.* So well bred.

Care. So ſurprizing.

Lady *Plyant.* So well dreſt, ſo *bonne mine*, ſo eloquent, ſo unaffected, ſo eaſy, ſo free, ſo particular, ſo agreeable—

Sir *P. Plyant.* Ay, ſo, ſo, there.

Care. O Lord, I beſeech you, Madam, don't——

Lady *Plyant.* So gay, ſo graceful, ſo good teeth, ſo fine ſhape, ſo fine limbs, ſo fine linen, and I don't doubt but you have a very good skin, Sir.

Care. For heav'ns ſake, Madam ——I'm quite out of countenance.

Sir *P. Plyant.* And my Lady's quite out of breath; or elſe you ſhould hear——Gads-bud, you may talk of my Lady Froth.

Care. O fie, fie, not to be named of a day——My Lady Froth is very well in her accompliſhments—But it is when my Lady Plyant is not thought of——if that can ever be.

Lady *Plyant.* O you overcome me———That is ſo exceſſive.

Sir *P. Plyant.* Nay, I ſwear and vow that was pretty.

Care. O Sir Paul, you are the happieſt man alive. Such a lady! that is the envy of her own ſex, and the admiration of ours.

Sir *P. Plyant.* Your humble ſervant, I am, I thank heav'n, in a fine way of living, as I may ſay, peacefully and happily, and I think need not envy any of my neighbours, bleſſed be providence——Ay, truly, Mr. Careleſs, my Lady is a great bleſſing, a fine, diſcreet, well ſpoken woman as you ſhall ſee———If it becomes me to ſay ſo; and we live very comfortably together; ſhe is a little haſty ſometimes, and ſo am I; but mine's ſoon over, and then I'm ſo ſorry———O, Mr. Careleſs, if it were not for one thing———

SCENE VII.

CARELESS, *Sir* PAUL, *Lady* PLYANT, *Boy with a letter.*

Lady PLYANT.

HOW often have you been told of that, you jackanapes?

Sir *P. Plyant.* Gad ſo, gad's-bud———Tim, carry it to my Lady, you ſhould have carry'd it to my Lady firſt.

Boy. 'Tis directed to your worſhip.

Sir *P. Plyant.* Well, well, my Lady reads all letters firſt——child, do ſo no more: d'ye hear, Tim.

Boy. No, and't pleaſe you.

SCENE VIII.

CARELESS, *Sir* PAUL, *Lady* PLYANT.

Sir PAUL.

A Humour of my wife's, you know women have little fancies———But as I was telling you, Mr. Careleſs, if it were not for one thing, I ſhould think myſelf the happieſt man in the world; indeed that touches me near, very near.

Care. What can that be, Sir Paul?

Sir *Paul.* Why, I have, I thank heaven, a very plentiful fortune, a good eſtate in the country, ſome houſes in town, and ſome money, a pretty tolerable perſonal eſtate; and it is a great grief to me, indeed it is, Mr. Careleſs, that I have not a ſon to inherit this——'Tis true, I have a daughter, and a fine dutiful child ſhe is, though I ſay it, bleſſed be providence I may ſay; for indeed, Mr. Careleſs, I am mightily beholden to providence——A poor unworthy ſinner——But if I had a ſon, ah, that's my affliction, and my only affliction; indeed I cannot refrain tears when it comes in my mind. [*Cries.*

Care. Why, methinks that might be eaſily remedied—my Lady's a fine likely woman——

Sir *Paul.* Oh, a fine likely woman as you ſhall ſee in a ſummer's day—Indeed ſhe is, Mr. Careleſs, in all reſpects.

Care. And I ſhould not have taken you to have been ſo old——

Sir *Paul.* Alas, that's not it, Mr. Careleſs; ah! that's not it; no, no, you ſhoot wide of the mark a mile; indeed you do, that's not it, Mr. Careleſs; no, no, that's not it.

Care. No, what can be the matter then?

Sir *P. Plyant.* You'll ſcarcely believe me, when I ſhall tell you——my Lady is ſo nice——It's very ſtrange, but it's true: too true——ſhe's ſo very nice, that I don't believe ſhe would touch a man for the world——At leaſt not above once a year; I'm ſure I have found it ſo; and alas, what's once a year to an old man, who would do good in his generation? indeed it's true, Mr. Careleſs, it breaks my heart——I am her husband, as I may ſay; though far unworthy of that honour, yet I am her huſband; but alas-a-day, I have no more familiarity with her perſon—as to that matter—— than with my own mother——no indeed.

Care. Alas-a-day, this is a lamentable ſtory; my Lady muſt be told on't; ſhe muſt i'faith, Sir Paul; 'tis an injury to the world.

Sir *P. Plyant.* Ah! would to heav'n you would, Mr. Careleſs; you are mightily in her favour.

Care. I warrant you, what we muſt have a ſon ſome way or other.

Sir *P. Plyant.* Indeed, I ſhould be mightily bound to you, if you could bring it about, Mr. Careleſs.

L. Plyant. Here, Sir Paul, it's from your ſteward, here's a return of 600 pounds; you may take fifty of it for the next half year. [*Gives him the letter.*

SCENE IX.

[*To them*] *Lord* FROTH, CYNTHIA.

Sir PAUL.

HOW does my girl? come hither to thy father, poor lamb, thou'rt melancholick.

Ld *Froth.* Heav'n, Sir Paul, you amaze me, of all things in the world——You are never pleas'd but when we are

all upon the broad grin; all laugh, and no company; ah, then it is ſuch a ſight to ſee ſome teeth———Sure you're a great admirer of my Lady Whifler, Mr. Sneer, and Sir Laurence Loud, and that gang.

Sir *Paul.* I vow and ſwear ſhe's a very merry woman, but, I think ſhe laughs a little too much.

Ld *Froth.* Merry! O Lord, what a character that is of a woman of quality———You have been at my Lady Whifler's upon her day, Madam?

Cynth. Yes, my Lord, I muſt humour this fool. [*Aſide.*

Ld *Froth.* Well and how? hee! what is your ſenſe of the converſation?

Cynth. O moſt ridiculous, a perpetual conſort of laughing without any harmony; for ſure, my Lord, to laugh out of time, is as diſagreeable as to ſing out of time, or out of tune.

Ld *Froth.* Hee, hee, hee, right; and then, my Lady Whifler is ſo ready——ſhe always comes in three bars too ſoon———And then, what do they laugh at? for you know laughing without a jeſt is as impertinent, hee! as, as———

Cynth. As dancing without a fiddle.

Ld *Froth.* Juſt, i'faith: that was at my tongue's end.

Cynth. But that cannot be properly ſaid of them, for I think they are all in good nature with the world, and only laugh at one another; and you muſt allow they have all jeſts in their perſons, though they have none in their converſation.

Ld *Froth.* True, as I'm a perſon of honour———For heav'ns ſake let us ſacrifice 'em to mirth a little.

[*Enter boy and whiſpers Sir Paul.*

Sir *Paul.* Gads ſo———Wife wife, my Lady Plyant, I have a word.

L. *Plyant.* I'm buſy, Sir Paul, I wonder at your impertinence——

Care. Sir Paul, hark ye, I'm reaſoning the matter you know; Madam,————if your Ladyſhip pleaſe, we'll diſcourſe of this in the next room.

Sir *Paul.* O ho, I wiſh you good ſucceſs. I wiſh you good ſucceſs. Boy, tell my Lady, when ſhe has done, I would ſpeak with her below.

SCENE X.

CYNTHIA, *Lord* FROTH, *Lady* FROTH, BRISK.

Lady FROTH.

THEN you think that Epiſode between Suſan, the dairy-maid, and our coachman is not amiſs; you know, I may ſuppoſe the dairy in town, as well as in the country.

Briſk. Incomparable, let me periſh ——But then being an Heroic poem, had not you better call him a *Charioteer? Charioteer* ſounds great; beſides, your Ladyſhip's coachman having a red face, and you comparing him to the Sun ——And you know the Sun is call'd *Heav'n's Charioteer.*

L. *Froth.* Oh, infinitely better; I'm extreamly beholden to you for the hint; ſtay, we'll read over thoſe half a ſcore lines again. [*Pulls out a paper.*] Let me ſee here, you know what goes before—the compariſon you know. Reads.] *For as the Sun ſhines ev'ry day,*

So of our coachman I may ſay.

Briſk. I'm afraid that ſimile won't do in wet weather—Becauſe you ſay the ſun ſhines every day.

L. *Froth.* No, for the Sun it won't, but it will do for

the coachman, for you know there's moſt occaſion for a coach in wet weather.

Brisk. Right, right, that ſaves all.

L. *Froth.* Then I don't ſay the ſun ſhines all the day, but that he peeps now and then, yet he does ſhine all the day too, you know, tho' we don't ſee him.

Brisk. Right; but the vulgar will never comprehend that.

L. *Froth.* Well, you ſhall hear—Let me ſee.

Reads.] *For as the Sun ſhines ev'ry day,*
So of our coachman I may ſay,
He ſhows his drunken fiery face,
Juſt as the Sun does, more or leſs.

Brisk. That's right; all's well, all's well. *More or leſs.*

L. *Froth.* Reads.]
And when at night his labour's done,
Then too, like heav'n's charioteer the Sun:

Ay, *Charioteer* does better.

Into the dairy he deſcends,
And there his whipping and his driving ends;
There he's ſecure from danger of a bilk,
His fare is paid him, and he ſets in milk.

For *Suſan*, you know, is *Thetis*, and ſo———

Brisk. Incomparably well and proper, i'gad———But I have one exception to make—Don't you think *Bilk* (I know it's good rhime) but don't you think *Bilk* and *Fare* too like a hackney coachman?

L. *Froth.* I ſwear and vow I'm afraid ſo——And yet our Jehu was a hackney coachman, when my Lord took him.

Brisk. Was he? I'm anſwer'd, if Jehu was a hackney coachman———You may put that in the marginal notes; tho', to prevent criticiſm—only mark it with a ſmall aſteriſm, and ſay,—Jehu was formerly a hackney coachman.

L. *Froth.* I will; you'd oblige me extreamly to write notes to the whole poem.

Brisk. With all my heart and ſoul, and proud of the vaſt honour, let me periſh.

Ld. *Froth.* Hee, hee, hee, my dear, have you done—won't you join with us? we were laughing at my Lady Whifler and Mr. Sneer.

L. *Froth.* —Ay my dear—Were you? O filthy Mr. Sneer; he's a nauſeous figure, a moſt fulſamick fop, foh ———He ſpent two days together in going about Covent Garden to ſuit the lining of his coach with his complexion.

Ld. *Froth.* O ſilly! yet his aunt is as fond of him, as if ſhe had brought the ape into the world herſelf.

Brisk. Who, my Lady Toothleſs; O, ſhe's a mortifying ſpectacle, ſhe's always chewing the cud like an old ewe.

Cynth. Fie, Mr. Brisk, Eringo's for her cough.

L. *Froth.* I have ſeen her take 'em half chew'd out of her mouth, to laugh, and then put 'em in again—Foh.

Ld. *Froth.* Foh.

L. *Froth.* Then ſhe's always ready to laugh when Sneer offers to ſpeak——And ſits in expectation of his no jeſt, with her gums bare, and her mouth open——

Brisk. Like an oyſter at low ebb, i'gad—Ha, ha, ha.

Cynth. [*Aſide.*] Well, I find there are no fools ſo inconſiderable in themſelves, but they can render other people contemptible by expoſing their infirmities.

L. *Froth.* Then that t'other great ſtrapping lady——I can't hit of her name; the old fat fool that paints ſo exorbitantly.

Brisk. I know whom you mean——But deuce take me I can't hit of her name neither——Paints, d'ye ſay? why ſhe lays it on with a trowel——Then ſhe has a great

beard that briſtles through it, and makes her look as if ſhe were plaiſter'd with lime and hair, let me periſh.

L. *Froth.* Oh you made a ſong upon her, Mr. Brisk.

Brisk. He? egad, ſo I did——My lord can ſing it.

Cynth. O good my Lord, let's hear it.

Brisk. 'Tis not a ſong neither--It's a ſort of an epigram, or rather an epigrammatick ſonnet; I don't know what to call it, but it's ſatire.———Sing it, my Lord.

Lord *Froth* ſings.

Antient Phillis has young graces,
'Tis a ſtrange thing, but a true one;
Shall I tell you how?
She herſelf makes her own faces,
And each morning wears a new one;
Where's the wonder now?

Brisk. Short, but there's ſalt in't; my way of writing, i'gad.

SCENE XI.

[*To them*] FOOTMAN.

Lady FROTH.

HOW now?

Foot. Your Ladyſhip's chair is come.

L. *Froth.* Is nurſe and the child in it?

Foot. Yes, Madam.

L. *Froth.* O the dear creature! let's go ſee it.

Ld. *Froth.* I ſwear, my dear, you'll ſpoil that child, with ſending it to and again ſo often; this is the ſeventh time the chair has gone for her to-day.

L. *Froth.* O-law, I ſwear it's but the ſixth—and I han't ſeen her theſe two hours——The poor dear creature—I ſwear, my Lord, you don't love poor little Sapho—Come,

my dear Cynthia, Mr. Brisk, we'll go ſee Sapho, tho' my Lord won't.

Cynth. I'll wait upon your Ladyſhip.

Brisk. Pray, Madam, how old is Lady Sapho?

L. *Froth.* Three quarters; but I ſwear ſhe has a world of wit, and can ſing a tune already. My Lord, won't you go? won't you? what, not to ſee Saph? pray, my Lord, come ſee little Saph. I knew you could not ſtay.

SCENE XII.

CYNTHIA, *alone.*

'TIS not ſo hard to counterfeit joy in the depth of affliction, as to diſſemble mirth in company of fools —Why ſhould I call 'em fools? the world thinks better of 'em; for theſe have quality and education, wit and fine converſation, are receiv'd and admir'd by the world —If not, they like and admire themſelves—And why is not that true wiſdom, for 'tis happineſs: and for ought I know, we have miſapply'd the name all this while, and miſtaken the thing: ſince

If happineſs in ſelf-content is plac'd,
The wiſe are wretched, and fools only bleſs'd.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

MELLEFONT *and* CYNTHIA.

CYNTHIA.

I Heard him loud as I came by the cloſet-door, and my lady with him, but ſhe ſeem'd to moderate his paſſion.

Mel. Ay, hell thank her, as gentle breezes moderate a fire; but I ſhall counter-work her ſpells, and ride the witch in her own bridle.

Cynth. It's impoſſible; ſhe'll caſt beyond you ſtill—— I'll lay my life it will never be a match.

Mel. What?

Cynth. Between you and me.

Mel. Why ſo?

Cynth. My mind gives me it won't—becauſe we are both willing; we each of us ſtrive to reach the goal, and hinder one another in the race; I ſwear it never does well when the parties are ſo agreed—For when people walk hand in hand, there's neither overtaking nor meeting: we hunt in couples, where we both purſue the ſame game, but forget one another; and 'tis becauſe we are ſo near that we don't think of coming together.

Mel. Hum, 'gad I believe there's ſomething in't;—— marriage is the game that we hunt, and while we think that we only have it in view, I don't ſee but we have it in our power.

Cynth. Within reach; for example, give me your hand; you have look'd through the wrong end of the perſpective all this while; for nothing has been between us but our fears.

Mel. I don't know why we ſhould not ſteal out of the houſe this very moment and marry one another, without

conſideration or the fear of repentance. Pox o' fortune, portion, ſettlements and jointures.

Cynth. Ay, ay, what have we to do with 'em; you know we marry for love.

Mel. Love, love, down-right very villainous love.

Cynth. And he that can't live upon love, deſerves to die in a ditch.——Here then, I give you my promiſe, in ſpight of duty, any temptation of wealth, your inconſtancy, or my own inclination to change——

Mel. To run moſt wilfully and unreaſonably away with me this moment, and be married.

Cynth. Hold——Never to marry any body elſe.

Mel. That's but a kind of negative conſent—— Why, you won't baulk the frolick?

Cynth. If you had not been ſo aſſured of your own conduct I would not———But 'tis but reaſonable that ſince I conſent to like a man without the vile conſideration of money, he ſhould give me a very evident demonſtration of his wit: therefore let me ſee you undermine my Lady Touchwood, as you boaſted, and force her to give her conſent, and then———

Mel. I'll do't.

Cynth. And I'll do't.

Mel. This very next enſuing hour of eight a clock, is the laſt minute of her reign, unleſs the devil aſſiſt her in *propria perſona.*

Cynth. Well, if the devil ſhould aſſiſt her, and your plot miſcarry.——

Mel. Ay, what am I to truſt to then?

Cynth. Why if you give me very clear demonſtration that it was the devil, I'll allow for irreſiſtible odds. But if I find it to be only chance, or deſtiny, or unlucky ſtars, or any thing but the very devil, I'm inexorable: only ſtill I'll keep my word, and live a maid for your ſake.

Mel. And you won't die one, for your own, ſo ſtill there's hope.

Cynth. Here's my mother-in-law, and your friend Careleſs; I would not have 'em ſee us together yet.

SCENE II.

CARELESS, *and Lady* PLYANT.

Lady PLYANT.

I Swear, Mr. Careleſs, you are very alluring——And ſay ſo many fine things, and nothing is ſo moving to me as a fine thing. Well, I muſt do you this juſtice, and declare in the face of the world, never any body gain'd ſo far upon me as yourſelf; with bluſhes I muſt own it, you have ſhaken, as I may ſay, the very foundation of my honour—— Well, ſure if I eſcape your importunities, I ſhall value myſelf as long as I live, I ſwear.

Care. And deſpiſe me. [*Sighing.*

L. *Plyant.* The laſt of any man in the world, by my purity; now you make me ſwear——O gratitude forbid that I ſhould ever be wanting in a reſpectful acknowledgment of an entire reſignation of all my beſt wiſhes, for the perſon and parts of ſo accompliſh'd a perſon, whoſe merit challenges much more, I'm ſure, than my illiterate praiſes can deſcription——

Care. [*In a whining tone.*] Ah heav'ns, Madam, you ruin me with kindneſs; your charming tongue purſues the victory of your eyes, while at your feet your poor adorer dies.

L. *Plyant.* Ah! very fine.

Care. [*Still whining.*] Ah why are you ſo fair, ſo bewitching fair? O let me grow to the ground here, and feaſt upon that hand; O let me preſs it to my heart, my trem-

bling heart, the nimble movement ſhall inſtruct your pulſe, and teach it to alarm deſire.

[*Zoons I'm almoſt at the end of my cant, if ſhe does not yield quickly.* [*Aſide.*

L. *Plyant.* O that's ſo paſſionate and fine, I cannot hear it—I am not ſafe if I ſtay, and muſt leave you.

Care. And muſt you leave me! rather let me languiſh out a wretched life, and breathe my ſoul beneath your feet.

[*I muſt ſay the ſame thing over again, and can't help it.* [*Aſide.*

L. *Plyant.* I ſwear I'm ready to languiſh too—O my honour! whither is it going? I proteſt you have given me the palpitation of the heart.

Care. Can you be ſo cruel?———

L. *Plyant.* O riſe I beſeech you, ſay no more 'till you riſe———Why did you kneel ſo long? I ſwear I was ſo tranſported, I did not ſee it.——Well, to ſhew you how far you have gain'd upon me; I aſſure you, if Sir Paul ſhould die, of all mankind there's none I'd ſooner make my ſecond choice.

Care. O heav'n! I can't out-live this night without your favour—I feel my ſpirits faint, a general dampneſs over-ſpreads my face, a cold deadly dew already vents through all my pores, and will to-morrow waſh me for ever from your ſight, and drown me in my tomb.

L. *Plyant.* O you have conquer'd, ſweet, melting, moving Sir, you have conquer'd—What heart of marble can refrain to weep, and yield to ſuch ſad ſayings.— [*Cries.*

Care. I thank heav'n, they are the ſaddeſt that I ever ſaid——Oh! [*I ſhall never contain laughter.* [*Aſide.*

L. *Plyant.* Oh, I yield myſelf all up to your uncontroulable embraces——Say, thou dear dying man, when, where, and how.———Ah, there's Sir Paul.

Care. 'Slife, yonder's Sir Paul; but if he were not come, I'm ſo tranſported I cannot ſpeak——This note will inform you. [*Gives her a note.*

SCENE III.

Lady PLYANT, *Sir* PAUL, CYNTHIA.

Sir PAUL.

THOU art my tender lambkin, and ſhalt do what thou wilt——But endeavour to forget this Mellefont.

Cynth. I would obey you to my power, Sir; but if I have not him, I have ſworn never to marry.

Sir *Paul.* Never to marry! heav'ns forbid; muſt I neither have ſons nor grandſons? muſt the family of the Plyants be utterly extinct for want of iſſue male. Oh impiety! but did you ſwear, did that ſweet creature ſwear! ha? how durſt you ſwear without my conſent, ah? gadsbud, who am I?

Cynth. Pray don't be angry, Sir, when I ſwore, I had your conſent; and therefore I ſwore.

Sir *Paul.* Why then the revoking my conſent does annul, or make of none effect your oath: ſo you may unſwear it again——The law will allow it.

Cynth. Ay, but my conſcience never will.

Sir *Paul.* Gads-bud no matter for that, conſcience and law never go together; you muſt not expect that.

L. *Plyant.* Ay, but Sir Paul, I conceive if ſhe has ſworn, d'ye mark me, if ſhe has once ſworn; it is moſt unchriſtian, inhuman, and obſcene that ſhe ſhould break it.——I'll make up the match again, becauſe Mr. Careleſs ſaid it would oblige him. [*Aſide.*

Sir *Paul.* Does your Ladyſhip conceive ſo——Why, I was of that opinion once too——Nay if your Ladyſhip

bling heart, the nimble movement ſhall inſtruct your pulſe, and teach it to alarm deſire.

[*Zoons I'm almoſt at the end of my cant, if ſhe does not yield quickly.* [*Aſide.*

L. *Plyant.* O that's ſo paſſionate and fine, I cannot hear it—I am not ſafe if I ſtay, and muſt leave you.

Care. And muſt you leave me! rather let me languiſh out a wretched life, and breathe my ſoul beneath your feet.

[*I muſt ſay the ſame thing over again, and can't help it.* [*Aſide.*

L. *Plyant.* I ſwear I'm ready to languiſh too—O my honour! whither is it going? I proteſt you have given me the palpitation of the heart.

Care. Can you be ſo cruel?———

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Care. I thank heav'n, they are the ſaddeſt that I ever ſaid——Oh! [*I ſhall never contain laughter.* [*Aſide.*

L. *Plyant.* Oh, I yield myſelf all up to your uncontroulable embraces——Say, thou dear dying man, when, where, and how.———Ah, there's Sir Paul.

Care. 'Slife, yonder's Sir Paul; but if he were not come, I'm ſo tranſported I cannot ſpeak——This note will inform you. [*Gives her a note.*

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THOU art my tender lambkin, and ſhalt do what thou wilt——But endeavour to forget this Mellefont.

Cynth. I would obey you to my power, Sir; but if I have not him, I have ſworn never to marry.

Sir *Paul.* Never to marry! heav'ns forbid; muſt I neither have ſons nor grandſons? muſt the family of the Plyants be utterly extinct for want of iſſue male. Oh impiety! but did you ſwear, did that ſweet creature ſwear! ha? how durſt you ſwear without my conſent, ah? gadsbud, who am I?

Cynth. Pray don't be angry, Sir, when I ſwore, I had your conſent; and therefore I ſwore.

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Sir *Paul.* Does your Ladyſhip conceive ſo——Why, I was of that opinion once too——Nay if your Ladyſhip

conceives ſo, I'm of that opinion again; but I can neither find my Lord nor my Lady to know what they intend.

L. *Plyant.* I'm ſatisfy'd that my couſin Mellefont has been much wrong'd.

Cynth. [*Aſide.*] I'm amaz'd to find her of our ſide, for I'm ſure ſhe lov'd him.

L. *Plyant.* I know my Lady Touchwood has no kindneſs for him; and beſides, I have been informed by Mr. Careleſs, that Mellefont had never any thing more than a profound reſpect——That he has own'd himſelf to be my admirer 'tis true, but he was never ſo preſumptuous to entertain any diſhonourable notions of things; ſo that if this be made plain——I don't ſee how my daughter can in conſcience, or honour, or any thing in the world——

Sir *Paul.* Indeed if this be made plain, as my Lady your mother ſays, child——

L. *Plyant.* Plain! I was inform'd of it by Mr. Careleſs——And I aſſure you Mr. Careleſs is a perſon——that has a moſt extraordinary reſpect and honour for you, Sir Paul.

Cynth. [*Aſide.*] And for your Ladyſhip too, I believe, or elſe you had not chang'd ſides ſo ſoon; now I begin to find it.

Sir *Paul.* I am much oblig'd to Mr. Careleſs really, he is a perſon that I have a great value for, not only for that, but becauſe he has a great veneration for your Ladyſhip.

L. *Plyant.* O las, no indeed, Sir Paul, 'tis upon your account.

Sir *Paul.* No, I proteſt and vow, I have no title to his eſteem, but in having the honour to appertain in ſome meaſure to your Ladyſhip, that's all.

L. *Plyant.* O law now, I ſwear and declare, it ſhan't be ſo, you're too modeſt, Sir Paul.

Sir *Paul.* It becomes me, when there is any compariſon made between ——

L. *Plyant.* O fy, fy, Sir Paul, you'll put me out of countenance—Your very obedient and affectionate wife; that's all—And highly honour'd in that title.

Sir *Paul.* Gads-bud I am tranſported! give me leave to kiſs your Ladyſhip's hand.

Cynth. That my poor father ſhould be ſo very ſilly! [*Aſide.*

L. *Plyant.* My lip indeed, Sir Paul, I ſwear you ſhall. [*He kiſſes her, and bows very low.*

Sir *Paul.* I humbly thank your Ladyſhip——I don't know whether I fly on ground or walk in air—Gads-bud ſhe was never thus before——Well, I muſt own myſelf the moſt beholden to Mr. Careleſs——As ſure as can be this is all his doing——ſomething that he has ſaid; well, 'tis a rare thing to have an ingenious friend. Well, your Ladyſhip is of opinion that the match may go forewards?

L. *Plyant.* By all means—Mr. Careleſs has ſatisfy'd me of the matter.

Sir *Paul.* Well, why then, lamb, you may keep your oath, but have a care of making raſh vows; come hither to me, and kiſs Papa.

L. *Plyant.* I ſwear and declare, I am in ſuch a twitter to read Mr. Careleſs his letter, that I can't forbear any longer —— But though I may read all letters firſt by prerogative, yet I'll be ſure to be unſuſpected this time.—— Sir Paul.

Sir *Paul.* Did your ladyſhip call?

L. *Plyant.* Nay, not to interrupt you, my dear——Only lend me your letter, which you had from your ſteward to-

day: I would look upon the account again; and may be increaſe your allowance.

Sir *Paul.* There it is, Madam; do you want a pen and ink? [*Bows and gives the letter.*

L. *Plyant.* No, no, nothing elſe, I thank you, Sir Paul. ——So, now I can read my own letter under the cover of his. [*Aſide.*

Sir *Paul.* He? and wilt thou bring a grandſon at nine months end——He? a brave choping boy——I'll ſettle a thouſand pound a-year upon the rogue as ſoon as ever he looks me in the face, I will gads-bud. I'm overjoy'd to think I have any of my family that will bring children into the world. For I would fain have ſome reſemblance of myſelf in my poſterity, he *Thy?* Can't you contrive that affair, girl? do, gads-bud, think on thy old father; heh? make the young rogue as like as you can.

Cynth. I'm glad to ſee you ſo merry, Sir.

Sir *Paul.* Merry! gads-bud I'm ſerious, I'll give thee 500 l. for every inch of him that reſembles me; ah this eye, this left eye! a thouſand pound for this left eye. This has done execution in its time, girl; why thou haſt my leer, huſſy, juſt thy father's leer.——Let it be tranſmitted to the young rogue by the help of imagination: why 'tis the mark of our family, *Thy*; our houſe is diſtinguiſh'd by a languiſhing eye, as the houſe of Auſtria is by a thick lip.——Ah! when I was of your age, huſſey, I would have held fifty to one, I could have drawn my own picture——Gads-bud I could have done——not ſo much as you neither,——but——nay, dŏn't bluſh——

Cynth. I don't bluſh, Sir, for I vow I don't underſtand——

Sir *Paul.* Pſhaw, pſhaw, you fib you baggage, you do underſtand, and you ſhall underſtand; come don't be ſo nice, gads-bud don't learn after your mother-in-law my Lady here: marry heav'n forbid that you ſhould follow

her example, that would ſpoil all indeed. Bleſs us, if you ſhould take a vagarie, and make a raſh reſolution on your wedding night, to die a maid as ſhe did; all were ruin'd, all my hopes loſt——my heart would break, and my eſtate would be left to the wide world, he? I hope you are a better Chriſtian than to think of living a nun; he? anſwer me.

Cynth. I'm all obedience, Sir, to your commands.

L. *Plyant.* [*Having read the letter.*] O dear Mr. Careleſs, I ſwear he writes charmingly, and he looks charmingly, and he has charm'd me, as much as I have charm'd him; and ſo I'll tell him in the wardrobe when 'tis dark. O Crimine! I hope Sir Paul has not ſeen both letters.

[*Puts the wrong letter haſtily up, and gives him her own.* Sir Paul, here's your letter; to-morrow morning I'll ſettle accounts to your advantage.

SCENE IV.

[*To them* BRISK.

BRISK.

SIR Paul, gads-bud you're an uncivil perſon, let me tell you, and all that; and I did not think it had been in you.

Sir *Paul.* O law, what's the matter now? I hope you are not angry, Mr. Brisk.

Brisk. Deuce take me, I believe you intend to marry your daughter yourſelf; you're always brooding over her like an old hen, as if ſhe were not well hatch'd, i'gad he?

Sir *Paul.* Good ſtrange! Mr. Brisk is ſuch a merry facetious perſon, he, he, he. No, no, I have done with her, I have done with her now.

Brisk. The fidlers have ſtay'd this hour in the hall, and

my Lord Froth wants a partner, we can never begin without her.

Sir *Paul.* Oh, go child, go, get you gone and dance and be merry, I'll come and look at you by and by.—Where's my ſon Mellefont?

L. *Plyant.* I'll ſend him to them: I know where he is—

Brisk. Sir Paul, will you ſend Careleſs into the hall if you meet him?

Sir *Paul.* I will, I will, I'll go and look for him on purpoſe.

SCENE V.

BRISK *alone.*

SO now they are all gone, and I have an opportunity to practiſe.——— Ah! my dear Lady Froth! ſhe's a moſt engaging creature, if ſhe were not ſo fond of that damn'd coxcombly Lord of hers; and yet I am forc'd to allow him wit too, to keep in with him——No matter, ſhe's a woman of parts, and i'gad parts will carry her. She ſaid ſhe would follow me into the gallery—Now to make my approaches——Hem hem! Ah Ma- (*Bows*) dam! ——Pox on't, why ſhould I diſparage my parts by thinking what to ſay? none but dull rogues *think*; witty men, like rich fellows, are always ready for all expences; while your blockheads, like poor needy ſcoundrels, are forced to examine their ſtock, and forecaſt the charges of the day. Here ſhe comes, I'll ſeem not to ſee her, and try to win her with a new airy invention of my own: hem!

SCENE VI.

[*To him*] *Lady* FROTH.

BRISK *ſings walking about.*

I'*M ſick with love*, ha, ha, ha, *pr'ythee come cure me.*
I'm ſick with, &c.

O ye pow'rs! O my Lady Froth! my Lady Froth! my Lady Froth! Heigho! break my heart; gods I thank you. [*Stands muſing with his arms a-croſs.*

L. *Froth.* O heav'ns, Mr. Brisk: what's the matter?

Brisk. My Lady Froth! your Ladyſhip's moſt humble ſervant;——The matter, Madam? nothing, Madam, nothing at all i'gad. I was fallen into the moſt agreeable amuſement in the whole province of contemplation: that's all———(I'll ſeem to conceal my paſſion, and that will look like reſpect.) [*Aſide.*

L. *Froth.* Bleſs me, why did you call out upon me ſo loud?——

Brisk. O Lord, I, Madam! I beſeech your Ladyſhip—when?

L. *Froth.* Juſt now as I came in; bleſs me! why, don't you know it?

Brisk. Not I, let me periſh———But did I! ſtrange! I confeſs your Ladyſhip was in my thoughts; and I was in a ſort of dream that did in a manner preſent a very pleaſing object to my imagination; but——but did I indeed?———To ſee how love and murder will out. But did I really name my Lady Froth?

L. *Froth.* Three times aloud, as I love letters———But did you talk of love? O Parnaſſus! who would have thought Mr. Brisk could have been in love, ha, ha, ha.

O heav'ns! I thought you cou'd have no miſtreſs but the nine Muſes.

Brisk. No more I have i'gad, for I adore 'em all in your Ladyſhip——Let me periſh, I don't know whether to be ſplenatick, or airy upon't; the deuce take me if I can tell whether I am glad or ſorry that your Ladyſhip has made the diſcovery.

L. *Froth.* O be merry by all means——Prince Volſcius in love! ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. O barbarous, to turn me into ridicule! yet, ha, ha, ha. The deuce take me, I can't help laughing myſelf, ha, ha, ha; yet by heav'ns I have a violent paſſion for your Ladyſhip ſeriouſly.

L. *Froth.* Seriouſly? ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Seriouſly, ha, ha, ha. Gad I have, for all I laugh.

L. *Froth.* Ha, ha, ha! what d'ye think I laugh at? ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Me I'gad, ha, ha.

L. *Froth.* No, the deuce take me if I don't laugh at myſelf; for hang me if I have not a violent paſſion for Mr. Brisk, ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. Seriouſly?

L. *Froth.* Seriouſly, ha, ha, ha.

Brisk. That's well enough; let me periſh, ha, ha, ha. O miraculous, what a happy diſcovery. Ah my dear charming Lady Froth!

L. *Froth.* O my adored Mr. Brisk! [*Embrace.*

SCENE VII.

[*To them*] *Lord* FROTH.

Lord FROTH.

THE company are all ready——How now?

Brisk. Zoons, Madam, there's my Lord. [*Softly to her.*

L. *Froth.* Take no notice——but obſerve me——Now caſt off, and meet me at the lower end of the room, and then join hands again; I could teach my Lord this dance purely, but I vow, Mr. Brisk, I can't tell how to come ſo near any other man. Oh here's my Lord, now you ſhall ſee me do it with him.

[*They pretend to practiſe part of a country dance.*

Ld. *Froth.* ——Oh; I ſee there's no harm yet—But I don't like this familiarity. [*Aſide.*

L. *Froth.* ——Shall you and I do our cloſe dance, to ſhow Mr. Brisk.

Ld. *Froth.* No, my dear, do it with him.

L. *Froth.* I'll do it with him, my Lord, when you are out of the way.

Brisk. That's good i'gad, that's good. Deuce take me I can hardly help laughing in his face. [*Aſide.*

Ld. *Froth.* Any other time, my dear, or we'll dance it below.

L. *Froth.* With all my heart.

Brisk. Come, my Lord, I'll wait on you——my charming witty angel! [*To her.*

L. *Froth.* We ſhall have whiſpering time enough, you know, ſince we are partners.

SCENE VIII.

Lady PLYANT, *and* CARELESS.

Lady PLYANT.

O Mr. Careleſs, Mr. Careleſs, I'm ruin'd, I'm undone!

Care. What's the matter, Madam?

L. *Plyant.* O the unlucky'ſt accident, I'm afraid I ſhan't live to tell it you.

Care. Heav'n forbid! what is it?

L. *Plyant.* I'm in ſuch a fright; the ſtrangeſt quandary and premunire! I'm all over in an univerſal agitation, I dare ſwear every circumſtance of me trembles.—O your letter, your letter! by an unfortunate miſtake, I have given Sir Paul your letter inſtead of his own.

Care. That was unlucky.

L. *Plyant.* O yonder he comes reading of it; for heav'ns ſake ſtep in here and adviſe me quickly, before he ſees.

SCENE IX.

Sir PAUL *with a letter.*

Sir PAUL.

O Providence! what a conſpiracy have I diſcover'd—— But let me ſee to make an end on't————(*Reads*) Hum——*After ſupper in the wardrobe by the gallery. If Sir Paul ſhould ſurprize us, I have a commiſſion from him to treat with you about the very matter of fact*——Matter of fact! very pretty; it ſeems then I am conducing to my own cuckoldom? why this is the very traiterous poſition of taking up arms by my authority, againſt my perſon! well, let

me ſee——*'Till then I languiſh in expectation of my adored charmer.* *Dying* Ned Careleſs. Gads-bud, would that were matter of fact too. Die and be damn'd for a *Judas Maccabeus*, and *Iſcariot* both. O friendſhip! what art thou but a name! henceforward let no man make a friend that would not be a cuckold: for whomſoever he receives into his boſom, will find the way to his bed, and there return his careſſes with intereſt to his wife. Have I for this been pinion'd night after night for three years paſt? have I been ſwath'd in blankets 'till I have been even depriv'd of motion? have I approach'd the marriage bed with reverence as to a ſacred ſhrine, and deny'd myſelf the enjoyment of lawful domeſtick pleaſures to preſerve its purity, and muſt I now find it polluted by foreign iniquity? O my Lady Plyant, you were chaſte as ice, but you are melted now, and falſe as water.—— But providence has been conſtant to me in diſcovering this conſpiracy: ſtill I am beholden to providence, if it were not for providence, ſure, poor Sir Paul, thy heart would break.

SCENE X.

[*To him*] *Lady* PLYANT.

Lady PLYANT.

SO, Sir, I ſee you have read the letter,——Well now, Sir Paul, what do you think of your friend Careleſs? has he been treacherous, or did you give his inſolence a licenſe to make trial of your wife's ſuſpected virtue? d'ye ſee here? [*Snatches the letter as in anger.*] Look, read it: gad's my life if I thought it were ſo, I would this moment renounce all communication with you. Ungrateful monſter! he? Is it ſo? Ay, I ſee it, a plot upon my ho-

nour: your guilty cheeks confeſs it: O where ſhall wrong'd virtue fly for reparation! I'll be divorc'd this inſtant.

Sir *Paul.* Gads-bud what ſhall I ſay? this is the ſtrangeſt ſurpriſe! why I don't know any thing at all, nor I don't know whether there be any thing at all in the world, or no.

L. *Plyant.* I thought I ſhould try you, falſe man. I that never diſſembled in my life: yet to make trial of you, pretended to like that monſter of iniquity, Careleſs, and found out that contrivance to let you ſee this letter; which now I find was of your own inditing———I do, heathen, I do; ſee my face no more; I'll be divorced preſently.

Sir *Paul.* O ſtrange, what will become of me!——I'm ſo amaz'd, and ſo overjoy'd, ſo afraid, and ſo ſorry.——But did you give me this letter on purpoſe, he? did you?

L. *Plyant.* Did I? do you doubt me, Turk, Saracen? I have a couſin that's a proctor in the Commons, I'll go to him inſtantly——

Sir *Paul.* Hold, ſtay, I beſeech your Ladyſhip—I'm ſo overjoy'd, ſtay, I'll confeſs all.

L. *Plyant.* What will you confeſs, Jew?

Sir *Paul.* Why now, as I hope to be ſaved, I had no hand in this letter———Nay hear me, I beſeech your Ladyſhip: the devil take me now if he did not go beyond my commiſſion——If I had deſired him to do any more than ſpeak a good word only juſt for me; gads-bud only for poor Sir Paul, I'm an Anabaptiſt, or a Jew, or what you pleaſe to call me.

L. *Plyant.* Why is not here matter of fact?

Sir *Paul.* Ay, but by your own virtue and continency that matter of fact is all his own doing —I confeſs I had a great deſire to have ſome honours conferr'd upon me,

which lie all in your Ladyſhip's breaſt, and he being a well-ſpoken man, I deſired him to intercede for me.——

L. *Plyant.* Did you ſo, preſumption! Oh! he comes, the Tarquin comes; I cannot bear his ſight.

SCENE XI.

CARELESS, *Sir* PAUL PLYANT.

CARELESS.

SIR Paul, I'm glad I've met with you! 'gad I have ſaid all I could, but can't prevail———Then my friendſhip to you has carried me a little farther in this matter—

Sir *Paul.* Indeed———Well Sir—I'll diſſemble with him a little. [*Aſide.*

Care. Why faith I have in my time known honeſt gentlemen abuſed by a pretended coyneſs in their wives, and I had a mind to try my Lady's virtue——And when I could not prevail for you, 'gad I pretended to be in love myſelf——but all in vain, ſhe would not hear a word upon that ſubject: then I writ a letter to her; I don't know what effects that will have, but I'll be ſure to tell you when I do, tho' by this light I believe her virtue is impregnable.

Sir *Paul.* O providence! providence! what diſcoveries are here made? why, this is better and more miraculous than the reſt.

Care. What do you mean?

Sir *Paul.* I can't tell you, I am ſo overjoy'd; come along with me to my Lady, I can't contain myſelf; come my dear friend.

Care. So, ſo, ſo, this difficulty's over. [*Aſide.*

SCENE XII.

MELLEFONT, MASKWELL, *from different doors.*

MELLEFONT.

MAskwell! I have been looking for you——'tis within a quarter of eight.

Mask. My Lady is juſt gone into my Lord's cloſet, you had beſt ſteal into her chamber before ſhe comes, and lie concealed there, otherwiſe ſhe may lock the door when we are together, and you not eaſily get in to ſurprize us.

Mel. He? you ſay true.

Mask. You had beſt make haſte; for after ſhe has made ſome apology to the company for her own, and my Lord's abſence all this while, ſhe'll retire to her chamber inſtantly.

Mel. I go this moment: now Fortune I defie thee.

SCENE XIII.

MASKWELL, *alone.*

I Confeſs, you may be allow'd to be ſecure in your own opinion; the appearance is very fair, but I have an after-game to play that ſhall turn the tables, and here comes the man that I muſt manage.

SCENE XIV.

[*To him*] *Lord* TOUCHWOOD.

Lord TOUCHWOOD.

MAskwell, you are the man I wiſh'd to meet.

Mask. I am happy to be in the way of your Lordſhip's commands.

Ld. *Touch.* I have always found you prudent and careful in any thing that has concern'd me or my family.

Mask. I were a villain elſe——I am bound by duty and gratitude, and my own inclination, to be ever your Lordſhip's ſervant.

Ld. *Touch.* Enough——You are my friend; I know it: yet there has been a thing in your knowledge, which has concern'd me nearly, that you have conceal'd from me.

Mask. My Lord!

Ld. *Touch.* Nay, I excuſe your friendſhip to my unnatural nephew thus far——But I know you have been privy to his impious deſigns upon my wife. This ev'ning ſhe has told me all: her good nature conceal'd it as long as was poſſible; but he perſeveres ſo in villany, that ſhe has told me, even you were weary of diſſuading him, though you have once actually hindred him from forcing her.

Mask. I am ſorry, my Lord, I can't make you an anſwer; this is an occaſion in which I would willingly be ſilent.

Ld. *Touch.* I know you would excuſe him——And I know as well that you can't.

Mask. Indeed I was in hopes 'thad been a youthful heat, that might have ſoon boil'd over; but——

Ld. *Touch.* Say on.

Mask. I have nothing more to ſay, my Lord——But to expreſs my concern; for I think his frenzy increaſes daily.

Ld. *Touch.* How! give me but proof of it, ocular proof, that I may juſtify my dealing with him to the world, and ſhare my fortunes.

Mask. O my Lord! conſider that is hard: beſides, time may work upon him: then, for me to do it! I have profeſs'd an everlaſting friendſhip to him.

Ld. *Touch.* He is your friend, and what am I?

Mask. I am anſwered.

Ld. *Touch.* Fear not his diſpleaſure; I will put you out of his and Fortune's power; and for that thou art ſcrupulouſly honeſt, I will ſecure thy fidelity to him, and give my honour never to own any diſcovery that you ſhall make me. Can you give me a demonſtrative proof? ſpeak.

Mask. I wiſh I could not——To be plain, my Lord, I intended this evening to have try'd all arguments to diſſuade him from a deſign, which I ſuſpect; and if I had not ſucceeded, to have informed your Lordſhip of what I knew.

Ld. *Touch.* I thank you. What is the villain's purpoſe?

Mask. He has own'd nothing to me of late, and what I mean now, is only a bare ſuſpicion of my own. If your Lordſhip will meet me a quarter of an hour hence there, in that lobby of my Lady's bed-chamber, I ſhall be able to tell you more.

Ld. *Touch.* I will.

Mask. My duty to your Lordſhip, makes me do a ſevere piece of juſtice.

Ld. *Touch.* I will be ſecret, and reward your honeſty beyond your hopes.

SCENE XV.

SCENE *opening, ſhews Lady* TOUCHWOOD'S *chamber.*

MELLEFONT, *Solus.*

PRAY heav'n my aunt keep touch with her aſſignation.——Oh that her Lord were but ſweating behind this hanging, with the expectation of what I ſhall ſee——Hiſt, ſhe comes——Little does ſhe think

what a mine is juſt ready to ſpring under her feet. But to my poſt. [*Goes behind the hanging.*

SCENE XVI.

Lady TOUCHWOOD.

'TIS eight a clock: methinks I ſhould have found him here. Who does not prevent the hour of love, outſtays the time; for to be dully punctual, is too ſlow—— I was accuſing you of neglect.

SCENE XVII.

Lady TOUCHWOOD, *and* MASKWELL.

MELLEFONT *abſconding.*

MASKWELL.

I Confeſs you do reproach me when I ſee you here before me; but 'tis fit I ſhould be ſtill behind-hand, ſtill to be more and more indebted to your goodneſs.

L. *Touch.* You can excuſe a fault too well, not to have been to blame——A ready anſwer ſhews you were prepared.

Mask. Guilt is ever at a loſs, and confuſion waits upon it; when innocence and bold truth are always ready for expreſſion——

L. *Touch.* Not in love; words are the weak ſupport of cold indifference; love has no language to be heard.

Mask. Exceſs of joy has made me ſtupid! thus may my lips be ever clos'd. [*Kiſſes her.*] And thus——Oh who would not loſe his ſpeech, upon condition to have joys above it?

L. *Touch.* Hold, let me lock the door firſt. [*Goes to the door.*

Mask. [*Aſide.* That I believ'd; 'twas well I left the private paſſage open.

L. *Touch.* So that's ſafe.

Mask. And ſo may all your pleaſures be, and ſecret as this kiſs——

Mel. And may all treachery be thus diſcover'd.

[*Leaps out.*

L. *Touch.* Ah! [*Shrieks.*

Mel. Villain! [*Offers to draw.*

Mask. Nay then, there's but one way. [*Runs out.*

SCENE XVIII.

Lady TOUCHWOOD, MELLEFONT.

MELLEFONT.

SAY you ſo, were you provided for an eſcape? hold, Madam, you have no more holes to your borough, I'll ſtand between you and this ſally-port.

L. *Touch.* Thunder ſtrike thee dead for this deceit, immediate lightning blaſt thee, me and the whole world—— Oh! I could rack myſelf, play the vulture to my own heart, and gnaw it piece-meal, for not boding to me this misfortune.

Mel. Be patient.——

L. *Touch.* Be damn'd.

Mel. Conſider I have you on the hook; you will but flounder yourſelf a weary, and be nevertheleſs my priſoner.——

L. *Touch.* I'll hold my breath and die, but I'll be free.

Mel. O Madam, have a care of dying unprepar'd; I doubt you have ſome unrepented ſins that may hang heavy, and retard your flight.

L. *Touch.* O! what ſhall I do? ſay? whither ſhall I turn? has hell no remedy?

Mel. None. Hell has ſerv'd you ev'n as heav'n has done, left you to yourſelf.——You're in a kind of Eraſmus' paradiſe; yet, if you pleaſe, you may make it a purgatory; and with a little penance, and my abſolution, all this may turn to good account.

L. *Touch.* [*Aſide.*] Hold in my paſſion, and fall, fall a little thou ſwelling heart; let me have ſome intermiſſion of this rage, and one minute's coolneſs to diſſemble.] [*She weeps.*

Mel. You have been to blame——I like thoſe tears, and hope they are of the pureſt kind——penitential tears.

L. *Touch.* O the ſcene was ſhifted quick before me——I had not time to think——I was ſurprized to ſee a monſter in the glaſs, and now I find 'tis myſelf; can you have mercy to forgive the faults I have imagin'd, but never put in practice——O conſider, conſider how fatal you have been to me, you have already kill'd the quiet of this life. The love of you was the firſt wandring fire that e'er miſled my ſteps, and while I had only that in view, I was betray'd into unthought-of ways of ruin.

Mel. May I believe this true?

L. *Touch.* O be not cruelly incredulous——How can you doubt theſe ſtreaming eyes? keep the ſevereſt eye o'er all my future conduct; and if I once relapſe, let me not hope forgiveneſs; 'twill ever be in your power to ruin me——My Lord ſhall ſign to your deſires; I will myſelf create your happineſs, and Cynthia ſhall be this night your bride——Do but conceal my failings, and forgive.

Mel. Upon ſuch terms I will be ever your's in ev'ry honeſt way.

SCENE XIX.

MASKWELL *ſoftly introduces Lord* TOUCHWOOD, *and retires.*

MASKWELL.

I Have kept my word, he's here, but I muſt not be ſeen.

SCENE XX.

Lady TOUCHWOOD, *Lord* TOUCHWOOD, MELLEFONT.

Lord TOUCHWOOD.

HELL and amazement! ſhe's in tears.

L. *Touch.* (*Kneeling.*) Eternal bleſſings thank you ————Ha! my Lord liſt'ning! O fortune has o'erpaid me all, all! all's my own! [*Aſide.*

Mel. Nay I beſeech you riſe.

L. *Touch.* (*Aloud.*) Never, never! I'll grow to the ground, be buried quick beneath it, e'er I'll be conſenting to ſo damn'd a ſin as inceſt! unnatural inceſt!

Mel. Ha!

L. *Touch.* O cruel man, will you not let me go——I'll forgive all that's paſt——O heav'n, you will not raviſh me!

Mel. Damnation!

Ld. *Touch.* Monſter, dog! your life ſhall anſwer this—

[*Draws and runs at Mellefont, is held by Lady Touchwood.*

L. *Touch.* O heav'ns, my Lord! hold! hold! for heav'n's ſake.

Mel. Confuſion! my uncle! O the damn'd ſorcereſs!

L. *Touch.* Moderate your rage, good my Lord! he's

mad, alas he's mad——Indeed he is, my Lord, and knows not what he does——See how wild he looks.

Mel. By heav'n 'twere ſenſeleſs not to be mad, and ſee ſuch witchcraft.

L. *Touch.* My Lord, you hear him, he talks idly.

Ld. *Touch.* Hence from my ſight, thou living infamy to my name; when next I ſee that face I'll write villain in't with my ſword's point.

Mel. Now, by my ſoul, I will not go 'till I have made known my wrongs———Nay, 'till I have made known your's, which (if poſſible) are greater———though ſhe has all the hoſt of hell her ſervants.

L. *Touch.* Alas he raves! talks very poetry! for heav'n's ſake away my Lord, he'll either tempt you to extravagance, or commit ſome himſelf.

Mel. Death and furies, will you not hear me——Why by heav'n ſhe laughs, grins, points to your back; ſhe forks out cuckoldom with her fingers, and you're running horn-mad after your fortune.

[*As ſhe is going ſhe turns back and ſmiles at him.*

Ld. *Touch.* I fear he's mad indeed———Let's ſend Maskwell to him.

Mel. Send him to her.

L. *Touch.* Come, come, good my Lord, my heart akes ſo, I ſhall faint if I ſtay.

SCENE XXI.

MELLEFONT *alone.*

O I could curſe my ſtars, fate, and chance; all cauſes and accidents of fortune in this life! but to what purpoſe? yet, 'ſdeath, for a man to have the fruit of all his induſtry grow full and ripe, ready to drop into his

mouth, and juſt when he holds out his hand to gather it, to have a ſudden whirlwind come, tear up tree and all, and bear away the very root and foundation of his hopes; what temper can contain? they talk of ſending Maskwell to me; I never had more need of him———But what can he do? imagination cannot form a fairer and more plauſible deſign than this of his which has miſcarried—— O my precious aunt, I ſhall never thrive without I deal with the devil, or another woman.

Women, like flames, have a deſtroying power,
Ne'er to be quench'd, till they themſelves devour.

SCENE *ſhuts.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

Lady TOUCHWOOD *and* MASKWELL.

Lady TOUCHWOOD.

WAS'T not lucky?

Mask. Lucky! fortune is your own, and 'tis her intereſt ſo to be; by heav'n I believe you can controul her pow'r, and ſhe fears it; though chance brought my Lord, 'twas your own art that turn'd it to advantage.

L. *Touch.* 'Tis true, it might have been my ruin—— But yonder's my Lord, I believe he's coming to find you, I'll not be ſeen.

SCENE II.

MASKWELL *alone.*

SO; I durſt not own my introducing my Lord, though it ſucceeded well for her; for ſhe would have ſuſpected a deſign which I ſhould have been puzzled to excuſe. My Lord is thoughtful———I'll be ſo too; yet he ſhall know my thoughts; or think he does———

SCENE III.

[*To him*] *Lord* TOUCHWOOD.

MASKWELL.

WHAT have I done?

Ld. *Touch.* Talking to himſelf!

Mask. 'Twas honeſt———and ſhall I be rewarded for it? no, 'twas honeſt, therefore I ſhan't;———Nay, rather therefore I ought not; for it rewards itſelf.

Ld. *Touch.* Unequal'd virtue! [*Aſide.*

Mask. But ſhould it be known! then I have loſt a friend! he was an ill man, and I have gain'd; for half myſelf I lent him, and that I have recall'd; ſo I have ſerved myſelf, and what is yet better, I have ſerved a worthy Lord to whom I owe myſelf.

Ld. *Touch.* Excellent man! [*Aſide.*

Mask. Yet I am wretched. O there is a ſecret burns within this breaſt, which, ſhould it once blaze forth, would ruin all, conſume my honeſt character, and brand me with the name of villain.

Ld. *Touch.* Ha!

Mask. Why do I love! yet heav'n and my waking conſcience are my witneſſes, I never gave one working thought a vent; which might diſcover that I lov'd, nor ever muſt; no, let it prey upon my heart; for I would rather die, than ſeem once, barely ſeem, diſhoneſt: O, ſhould it once be known I love fair Cynthia, all this that I have done, would look like rival's malice, falſe friendſhip to my Lord, and baſe ſelf-intereſt. Let me periſh firſt, and from this hour avoid all ſight and ſpeech, and, if I can, all thought of that pernicious beauty. Ha! but what is my diſtraction doing? I am wildly talking to myſelf, and ſome ill chance might have directed malicious ears this way. [*Seems to ſtart, ſeeing my Lord.*

Ld. *Touch.* Start not——let guilty and diſhoneſt ſouls ſtart at the revelation of their thoughts, but be thou fix'd, as is thy virtue.

Mask. I am confounded, and beg your Lordſhip's pardon for thoſe free diſcourſes which I have had with myſelf.

Ld. *Touch.* Come, I beg your pardon that I overheard you, and yet it ſhall not need———Honeſt Maskwell! thy and my good genius led me hither———Mine, in that I have diſcover'd ſo much manly virtue; thine, in that

thou ſhalt have due reward of all thy worth. Give me thy hand——my nephew is the alone remaining branch of all our ancient family; him I thus blow away, and conſtitute thee in his room to be my heir————

Mask. Now heav'n forbid————

Ld. *Touch.* No more——I have reſolv'd——the writings are ready drawn, and wanted nothing but to be ſign'd, and have his name inſerted—— Your's will fill the blank as well——I will have no reply————Let me command this time; for 'tis the laſt, in which I will aſſume authority—hereafter, you ſhall rule where I have power.

Mask. I humbly would petition————

Ld. *Touch.* Is't for yourſelf?—[*Mask. pauſes.*] I'll hear of nought for any body elſe.

Mask. Then witneſs heav'n for me, this wealth and honour was not of my ſeeking, nor would I build my fortune on another's ruin: I had but one deſire——

Ld. *Touch.* Thou ſhalt enjoy it——If all I am worth in wealth or intereſt can purchaſe Cynthia, ſhe is thine——I'm ſure Sir Paul's conſent will follow fortune; I'll quickly ſhew him which way that is going.

Mask. You oppreſs me with bounty; my gratitude is weak, and ſhrinks beneath the weight, and cannot riſe to thank you——What, enjoy my love! forgive the tranſports of a bleſſing ſo unexpected, ſo unhop'd for, ſo unthought of!

Ld. *Touch.* I will confirm it, and rejoice with thee.

SCENE IV.

MASKWELL *alone.*

THIS is proſp'rous indeed————Why let him find me out a villain, ſettled in poſſeſſion of a fair eſtate, and full fruition of my love, I'll bear the railings of a loſing

gameſter———But ſhou'd he find me out before! 'tis dangerous to delay——Let me think—ſhou'd my Lord proceed to treat openly of my marriage with Cynthia, all muſt be diſcover'd, and Mellefont can be no longer blinded———It muſt not be; nay, ſhou'd my Lady know it———ay, then were fine work indeed! her fury would ſpare nothing, tho' ſhe involv'd herſelf in ruin. No, it muſt be by ſtratagem———I muſt deceive Mellefont once more, and get my Lord to conſent to my private management. He comes opportunely——Now will I, in my old way, diſcover the whole and real truth of the matter to him, that he may not ſuſpect one word on't.

No maſk like open truth to cover lies,
As to go naked in the beſt diſguiſe.

SCENE V.

[*To him*] MELLEFONT.

MELLEFONT.

O Maskwell, what hopes? I am confounded in a maze of thoughts, each leading into one another, and all ending in perplexity. My uncle will not ſee, nor hear me.

Mask. No matter, Sir, don't trouble your head, all's in my power.

Mel. How? for heav'n's ſake?

Mask. Little do you think that your aunt has kept her word,——How the devil ſhe wrought my Lord into this dotage, I know not; but he's gone to Sir Paul about my marriage with Cynthia, and has appointed me his heir.

Mel. The devil he has! what's to be done?

Mask. I have it; it muſt be by ſtratagem; for it's in

vain to make application to him. I think I have that in my head that cannot fail: where's Cynthia?

Mel. In the garden.

Mask. Let us go and conſult her; my life for your's, I cheat my Lord.

SCENE VI.

Lord TOUCHWOOD, *Lady* TOUCHWOOD.

Lady TOUCHWOOD.

MAskwell your heir, and marry Cynthia!

Ld. *Touch.* I cannot do too much, for ſo much merit.

L. *Touch.* But this is a thing of too great moment to be ſo ſuddenly reſolv'd. Why Cynthia? why muſt he be marry'd? is there not reward enough in raiſing his low fortune, but he muſt mix his blood with mine, and wed my niece? how know you my brother will conſent, or ſhe? nay, he himſelf perhaps may have affections otherwhere.

Ld. *Touch.* No, I am convinc'd he loves her.

L. *Touch.* Maskwell love Cynthia? impoſſible!

Ld. *Touch.* I tell you, he confeſs'd it to me.

L. *Touch.* Confuſion! how's this! [*Aſide.*

Ld. *Touch.* His humility long ſtifled his paſſion: and his love of Mellefont would have made him ſtill conceal it. ——But by encouragement, I wrung the ſecret from him; and know he's no way to be rewarded but in her. I'll defer my farther proceedings in it till you have conſider'd it; but remember how we are both indebted to him.

SCENE VII.

Lady TOUCHWOOD *alone.*

BOTH indebted to him! yes, we are both indebted to him, if you knew all. Villain! Oh, I am wild with this ſurprize of treachery: it is impoſſible; it cannot be. ——He love Cynthia! what, have I been bawd to his deſigns, his property only, a baiting place? now I ſee what made him falſe to Mellefont.——Shame and diſtraction! I cannot bear it. Oh! what woman can bear to be a property? to be kindled to a flame, only to light him to another's arms? Oh! that I were fire indeed, that I might burn the vile traitor. What ſhall I do? how ſhall I think? I cannot think.——All my deſigns are loſt, my love unfated, my revenge unfiniſh'd, and freſh cauſe of fury from unthought-of plagues.

SCENE VIII.

[*To her*] *Sir* PAUL PLYANT.

Sir PAUL.

MADAM, ſiſter, my Lady Siſter, did you ſee my Lady my wife?

L. *Touch.* O torture!

Sir *Paul.* Gads-bud, I can't find her high nor low; where can ſhe be, think you?

L. *Touch.* Where ſhe's ſerving you, as all your ſex ought to be ſerv'd; making you a beaſt. Don't you know that you're a fool, brother?

Sir *Paul.* A fool! he, he, he, you're merry——No, no, not I, I know no ſuch matter.

L. *Touch.* Why then you don't know half your happineſs.

Sir *Paul.* That's a jeſt with all my heart, faith and troth, ——But harkye, my Lord told me ſomething of a revolution of things; I don't know what to make on't,—Gadsbud I muſt conſult my wife,——he talks of diſinheriting his nephew; and I don't know what,——— Look you, ſiſter, I muſt know what my girl has to truſt to; or not a ſyllable of a wedding, gads-bud——to ſhew you that I am not a fool.

L. *Touch.* Hear me; conſent to the breaking off this marriage, and the promoting any other, without conſulting me, and I'll renounce all blood, all relation and concern with you for ever, ——nay, I'll be your enemy, and purſue you to deſtruction, I'll tear your eyes out, and tread you under my feet.———

Sir *Paul.* Why, what's the matter now? good Lord, what's all this for? pooh, here's a joke indeed——Why, where's my wife?

L. *Touch.* With Careleſs, in the cloſe arbour; he may want you by this time, as much as you want her.

Sir *Paul,* O, if ſhe be with Mr. Careleſs, 'tis well enough.

L. *Touch.* Fool, ſot, inſenſible ox! but remember what I ſaid to you, or you had better eat your own horns, by this light you had.

Sir *Paul.* You're a paſſionate woman, Gads-bud,——— But to ſay truth, all our family are cholerick; I am the only peaceable perſon amongſt 'em.

SCENE IX.

MELLEFONT, MASKWELL *and* CYNTHIA.

MELLEFONT.

I Know no other way but this he has propos'd; if you have love enough to run the venture.

Cynth. I don't know whether I have love enough,——but I find I have obſtinacy enough to purſue whatever I have once reſolv'd; and a true female courage to oppoſe any thing that reſiſts my will, tho' it were reaſon itſelf.

Mask. That's right,——Well I'll ſecure the writings, and run the hazard along with you.

Cynth. But how can the coach and ſix horſes be got ready without ſuſpicion?

Mask. Leave it to my care; that ſhall be ſo far from being ſuſpected, that it ſhall be got ready by my Lord's own order.

Mel. How?

Mask. Why, I intend to tell my Lord the whole matter of our contrivance; that's my way.

Mel. I don't underſtand you.

Mask. Why, I'll tell my Lord, I laid this plot with you, on purpoſe to betray you; and that which put me upon it, was, the finding it impoſſible to gain the Lady any other way, but in the hopes of her marrying you.—

Mel. So——

Mask. So, why ſo, while you're buſied in making yourſelf ready, I'll wheedle her into the coach; and inſtead of you, borrow my Lord's chaplain, and ſo run away with her myſelf.

Mel. O I conceive you, you'll tell him ſo?

Mask. Tell him ſo! ay; why you don't think I mean to do ſo?

Mel. No, no; ha, ha, I dare ſwear thou wilt not.

Mask. Therefore for our farther ſecurity, I would have you diſguis'd like a parſon, that if my Lord ſhould have curioſity to peep, he may not diſcover you in the coach, but think the cheat is carried on as he would have it.

Mel. Excellent Maskwell! thou wert certainly meant for a ſtateſman or a Jeſuit, —— but thou art too honeſt for one, and too pious for the other.

Mask. Well, get yourſelves ready, and meet me in half an hour, yonder in my Lady's dreſſing-room; go by the back ſtairs, and ſo we may ſlip down without being obſerv'd,——I'll ſend the chaplain to you with his robes; I have made him my own,—and ordered him to meet us to-morrow morning at St. Albans; there we will ſum up this account to all our ſatisfactions.

Mel. Should I begin to thank or praiſe thee, I ſhould waſte the little time we have.

SCENE X.

CYNTHIA, MASKWELL.

MASKWELL.

MADAM, you will be ready?

Cynth. I will be punctual to the minute. [*Going.*

Mask. Stay, I have a doubt—Upon ſecond thoughts, we had better meet in the chaplain's chamber here, the corner chamber at this end of the gallery, there is a back way into it, ſo that you need not come through this door —and a pair of private ſtairs leading down to the ſtables ——It will be more convenient.

Cynth. I am guided by you,—but Mellefontwill miſtake.

Mask. No, no, I'll after him immediately, and tell him.

Cynth. I will not fail.

SCENE XI.

MASKWELL *alone.*

WHY, *qui vult decipi decipiatur*———'Tis no fault of mine. I have told 'em in plain terms, how eaſy 'tis for me to cheat 'em; and if they will not hear the ſerpent's hiſs, they muſt be ſtung into experience, and future caution———Now to prepare my Lord to conſent to this,———But firſt I muſt inſtruct my little Levite; there is no plot, publick or private, that can expect to proſper without one of them has a finger in't. He promiſed me to be within at this hour.———Mr. Saygrace, Mr. Saygrace.

[*Goes to the chamber-door and knocks.*

SCENE XII.

MASKWELL, SAYGRACE.

Mr. SAYGRACE [*looking out.*]

SWEET Sir, I will but pen the laſt line of an acroſtick, and be with you in the twinkling of an ejaculation, in the pronouncing of an *Amen*, or before you can—

Mask. Nay, good Mr. Saygrace, do not prolong the time, by deſcribing to me the ſhortneſs of your ſtay; rather, if you pleaſe, defer the finiſhing of your wit, and let us talk about our buſineſs, it ſhall be tithes in your way.

Say. Enters.] You ſhall prevail, I would break off in the middle of a ſermon to do you a pleaſure.

Mask. You could not do me a greater,——except—— the buſineſs in hand——Have you provided a habit for Mellefont?

Say. I have, they are ready in my chamber, together with a clean ſtarch'd band and cuffs.

Mask. Good, let them be carry'd to him,——have you ſtitch'd the gown ſleeve, that he may be puzzled, and waſte time in putting it on?

Say. I have; the gown will not be indued without perplexity.

Mask. Meet me in half an hour, here in your own chamber. When Cynthia comes, let there be no light, and do not ſpeak, that ſhe may not diſtinguiſh you from Mellefont. I'll urge haſte, to excuſe your ſilence.

Say. You have no more commands?

Mask. None, your text is ſhort.

Say. But pithy, and I will handle it with diſcretion.

Mask. It will be the firſt you have ſo ſerv'd.

SCENE XIII.

Lord TOUCHWOOD, MASKWELL.

Lord TOUCHWOOD.

SURE I was born to be controlled by thoſe I ſhould command: My very ſlaves will ſhortly give me rules how I ſhall govern them.

Mask. I am concern'd to ſee your Lordſhip diſcompos'd.——

Ld. *Touch.* Have you ſeen my wife lately, or diſoblig'd her?

Mask. No, my Lord.—What can this mean! [*Aſide.*

Ld. *Touch.* Then Mellefont has urg'd ſome body to in-

cenſe her———Something ſhe has heard of you which carries her beyond the bounds of patience.

Mask. This I fear'd. (*Aſide.*) ——Did not your Lordſhip tell her of the honours you deſign'd me?

Ld. *Touch.* Yes.

Mask. 'Tis that; you know my Lady has a high ſpirit, ſhe thinks I am unworthy.

Ld. *Touch.* Unworthy! 'tis an ignorant pride in her to think ſo———Honeſty to me is true nobility. However 'tis my will it ſhall be ſo, and that ſhou'd be convincing to her as much as reaſon—— By heav'n, I'll not be wife-ridden; were it poſſible, it ſhou'd be done this night.

Mask. By heav'n he meets my wiſhes, (*Aſide.*)—— Few things are impoſſible to willing minds.

Ld. *Touch.* Inſtruct me how this may be done, you ſhall ſee I want no inclination.

Mask. I had laid a ſmall deſign for to-morrow (as love will be inventing) which I thought to communicate to your Lordship—But it may be as well done to-night.

Ld. *Touch.* Here's company—Come this way, and tell me.

SCENE XIV.

CARELESS *and* CYNTHIA.

CARELESS.

IS not that he, now gone out with my Lord?

Cynth. Yes.

Care. By heav'n there's treachery—The confuſion that I ſaw your father in, my Lady Touchwood's paſſion, with what imperfectly I overheard between my Lord and her, confirm me in my fears. Where's Mellefont?

Cyth. Here he comes.

SCENE XV.

[*To them*] MELLEFONT.

CYNTHIA.

DID Maskwell tell you any thing of the chaplain's chamber?

Mel. No; my dear, will you get ready—the things are all in my chamber; I want nothing but the habit.

Care. You are betray'd, and Maskwell is the villain I always thought him.

Cynth. When you were gone, he ſaid his mind was chang'd, and bid me meet him in the chaplain's room, pretending immediately to follow you, and give you notice.

Mel. How!

Care. There's Saygrace tripping by with a bundle under his arm———He cannot be ignorant that Maskwell means to uſe his chamber; let's follow and examine him.

Mel. 'Tis loſs of time—I cannot think him falſe.

SCENE XVI.

CYNTHIA, *Lord* TOUCHWOOD.

CYNTHIA.

MY Lord muſing!

Ld. *Touch.* He has a quick invention, if this were ſuddenly deſign'd———Yet he ſays he had prepar'd my chaplain already.

Cynth. How's this! now I fear indeed.

Ld. *Touch.* Cynthia here! alone, fair couſin, and melancholy?

Cynth. Your Lordſhip was thoughtful.

Ld. *Touch.* My thoughts were on ſerious buſineſs, not worth your hearing.

Cynth. Mine were on treachery concerning you, and may be worth your hearing.

Ld. *Touch.* Treachery concerning me! pray be plain—Hark! what noiſe!

Mask. (*within*). Will you not hear me?

L. *Touch.* (*within.*) No, monſter! traytor! no.

Cynth. My Lady and Maskwell! this may be lucky—My Lord, let me intreat you to ſtand behind this skreen, and liſten; perhaps this chance may give you proof of what you ne'er could have believ'd from my ſuſpicions.

SCENE XVII.

Lady TOUCHWOOD *with a dagger, and* MASKWELL; CYNTHIA *and Lord* TOUCHWOOD *abſcond, liſtning.*

Lady TOUCHWOOD.

YOU want but leiſure to invent freſh falſhood, and ſooth me to a fond belief of all your fictions; but I will ſtab the lie that's forming in your heart, and ſave a ſin, in pity to your ſoul.

Mask. Strike then—Since you will have it ſo.

L. *Touch.* Ha! A ſteady villain to the laſt!

Mask. Come, why do you dally with me thus?

L. *Touch.* Thy ſtubborn temper ſhocks me, and you knew it would—this is cunning all, and not courage; no, I know thee well: but thou ſhalt miſs thy aim.

Mask. Ha, ha, ha.

L. *Touch.* Ha! do you mock my rage? then this ſhall puniſh your fond, raſh contempt! again ſmile!

[*Goes to ſtrike.*

And ſuch a ſmile as ſpeaks in ambiguity! ten thouſand meanings lurk in each corner of that various face.

Oh! that they were written in thy heart, that I, with this, might lay thee open to my ſight!

But then 'twill be too late to know,———

Thou haſt, thou haſt found the only way to turn my rage; too well thou know'ſt my jealous ſoul cou'd never bear uncertainty. Speak then, and tell me——Yet are you ſilent? Oh, I am wilder'd in all paſſions! but thus my anger melts. (*Weeps*) Here, take this ponyard, for my very ſpirits faint, and I want ſtrength to hold it; thou haſt diſarm'd my ſoul. [*Gives the dagger.*

Ld. *Touch.* Amazement ſhakes me——Where will this end?

Mask. So, 'tis well——let your wild fury have a vent; and when you have temper, tell me.

L. *Touch.* Now, now, now I am calm, and can hear you.

Mask. (*Aſide.*) Thanks, my invention; and now I have it for you——Firſt tell me what urg'd you to this violence? for your paſſion broke in ſuch imperfect terms, that yet I am to learn the cauſe.

L. *Touch.* My Lord himſelf ſurpriz'd me with the news, you were to marry Cynthia——— That you had own'd your love to him, and his indulgence would aſſiſt you to attain your ends.

Cynth. How, my Lord!

Ld. *Touch.* Pray forbear all reſentments for a while, and let us hear the reſt.

Mask. I grant you in appearance all is true; I ſeem'd conſenting to my Lord; nay, tranſported with the bleſſing——But could you think that I, who had been happy in your lov'd embraces, could e'er be fond of an inferior ſlavery?

Ld. *Touch.* Ha! O poiſon to my ears! what do I hear!

Cynth. Nay, good my Lord, forbear reſentment, let us hear it out.

Ld. *Touch.* Yes, I will contain, tho' I cou'd burſt.

Mask. I that had wanton'd in the rich circle of your world of love, cou'd be confin'd within the puny province of a girl? no—Yet tho' I dote on each laſt favour more than all the reſt; though I would give a limb for every look you cheaply throw away on any other object of your love; yet ſo far I prize your pleaſures o'er my own, that all this ſeeming plot that I have laid, has been to gratifie your taſte, and cheat the world, to prove a faithful rogue to you.

L. *Touch.* If this were true——But how can it be?

Mask. I have ſo contriv'd, that Mellefont will preſently, in the chaplain's habit, wait for Cynthia in your dreſſing-room: but I have put the change upon her, that ſhe may be other-where employ'd——Do you procure her night-gown, and with your hoods tyed over your face, meet him in her ſtead; you may go privately by the back-ſtairs, and, unperceiv'd, there you may propoſe to reinſtate him in his uncle's favour, if he'll comply with your deſires; his caſe is deſperate, and I believe he'll yield to any conditions.——If not, here take this; you may employ it better, than in the heart of one who is nothing when not yours. [*Gives the dagger.*

L. *Touch.* Thou can'ſt deceive every body,——Nay, thou haſt deceiv'd me; but 'tis as I would wiſh,—Truſty villain! I could worſhip thee——

Mask. No more——It wants but a few minutes of the time; and Mellefont's love will carry him there before his hour.

L. *Touch.* I go, I fly, incomparable Maskwell!

SCENE XVIII.

MASKWELL, CYNTHIA, *Lord* TOUCHWOOD.

MASKWELL.

SO, this was a pinch indeed, my invention was upon the rack; and made diſcovery of her laſt plot: I hope Cynthia and my chaplain will be ready, I'll prepare for the expedition.

SCENE XIX.

CYNTHIA, *and Lord* TOUCHWOOD.

CYNTHIA.

NOW, my Lord?

Ld. *Touch.* Aſtoniſhment binds up my rage! villany upon villany! heav'ns, what a long track of dark deceit has this diſcover'd! I am confounded when I look back, and want a clue to guide me through the various mazes of unheard-of treachery. My wife! damnation! my hell!

Cynth. My Lord, have patience, and be ſenſible how great our happineſs is, that this diſcovery was not made too late.

Ld. *Touch.* I thank you; yet it may be ſtill too late, if we don't preſently prevent the execution of their plots; ——ha! I'll do't. Where's Melleſont, my poor injur'd nephew,— How ſhall I make him ample ſatisfaction?—

Cynth. I dare anſwer for him.

Ld. *Touch.* I do him freſh wrong to queſtion his forgiveneſs; for I know him to be all goodneſs,—Yet my wife! damn her,——She'll think to meet him in that dreſſing-

room;———Was't not ſo? and Maskwell will expect you in the chaplain's chamber.———For once, I'll add my plot too,———let us haſte to find out, and inform my nephew; and do you, quickly as you can, bring all the company into this gallery.———I'll expoſe the ſtrumpet and the villain.

SCENE XX.

Lord FROTH, *and Sir* PAUL PLYANT.

Lord FROTH.

BY heav'ns I have ſlept an age,——Sir Paul, what a clock is it! paſt eight, on my conſcience: my Lady's is the moſt inviting couch; and a ſlumber there, is the prettieſt amuſement! but where's all the company?——

Sir *Paul.* The company, gads-bud, I don't know, my Lord; but here's the ſtrangeſt revolution, all turn'd topſie turvy; as I hope for providence.

Ld. *Froth.* O heav'ns, what's the matter? where's my wife?

Sir *Paul.* All turn'd topſie turvy, as ſure as a gun.

Ld. *Froth.* How do you mean? my wife!

Sir *Paul.* The ſtrangeſt poſture of affairs!

Ld. *Froth.* What, my wife?

Sir *Paul.* No, no, I mean the family.——Your Lady's affairs may be in a very good poſture; I ſaw her go into the garden with Mr. Brisk.

Ld. *Froth.* How? where? when? what to do?

Sir *Paul.* I ſuppoſe they have been laying their heads together.

Ld. *Froth.* How?

Sir *Paul.* Nay, only about poetry, I ſuppoſe, my Lord; making couplets.

Ld. *Froth.* Couplets!

Sir *Paul.* O, here they come.

SCENE XXI.

[*To them*] *Lady* FROTH, BRISK.

BRISK.

MY Lord, your humble ſervant; Sir Paul, your's,—the fineſt night!

L. *Froth.* My dear, Mr. Brisk and I have been ſtargazing, I don't know how long.

Sir *Paul.* Does it not tire your Ladyſhip? are not you weary with looking up?

L. *Froth.* Oh, no, I love it violently———My dear, you're melancholly.

Ld. *Froth.* No, my dear; I'm but juſt awake.—

L. *Froth.* Snuff ſome of my ſpirit of hartshorn.

Ld. *Froth.* I have ſome of my own, thank you, my dear.

L. *Froth.* Well, I ſwear, Mr. Brisk, you underſtood aſtronomy like an old Egyptian.

Brisk. Not comparably to your Ladyſhip; you are the the very Cynthia of the skies, and queen of ſtars.

L. *Froth.* That's becauſe I have no light, but what's by reflection from you, who are the Sun.

Brisk. Madam, you have eclipſed me quite, let me periſh,——I can't anſwer that.

L. *Froth.* No matter,—Harkye, ſhall you and I make an almanack together?

Brisk. With all my ſoul,—— Your Ladyſhip has made me the man in't already, I'm ſo full of the wounds which you have given.

L. *Froth.* O finely taken! I ſwear now you are even with me. O Parnaſſus! you have an infinite deal of wit.

Sir *Paul.* So he has, gads-bud, and ſo has your lady-ſhip.

SCENE XXII.

[*To them*] *Lady* PLYANT, CARELESS, CYNTHIA.

Lady PLYANT.

YOU tell me moſt ſurprizing things; bleſs me, who would ever truſt a man? O my heart akes for fear they ſhould be all deceitful alike.

Care. You need not fear, Madam; you have charms to fix inconſtancy itſelf.

L. *Plyant.* O dear, you make me bluſh.

Ld. *Froth.* Come, my dear, ſhall we take leave of my Lord and Lady?

Cynth. They'll wait upon your Lordſhip preſently.

L. *Froth.* Mr. Brisk, my coach ſhall ſet you down.

All. What's the matter?

[*A great ſhrick from the corner of the ſtage.*

SCENE XXIII.

[*To them*] *Lady* TOUCHWOOD *runs out affrighted, my Lord after her, like a Parſon.*

Lady TOUCHWOOD.

O I'm betray'd. —Save me, help me!

Ld. *Touch.* Now, what evaſion, ſtrumpet?

L. *Touch.* Stand off, let me go.

Ld. *Touch.* Go, and thy own infamy purſue thee.——You ſtare as you were all amazed, — I don't wonder at it, ——but too ſoon you'll know mine and that woman's ſhame.

SCENE *the Laſt.*

Lord TOUCHWOOD, *Lord* FROTH, *Lady* FROTH, *Lady* PLYANT, *Sir* PAUL PLYANT, CYNTHIA, MELLEFONT, MASKWELL; MELLEFONT *diſguis'd in a parſon's habit, and pulling in* MASKWELL.

MELLEFONT.

NAY, by heav'n you ſhall be ſeen.——Careleſs, your hand:——Do you hold down your head? yes, I am your chaplain: look in the face of your injur'd friend; thou wonder of all falſhood.

Ld. *Touch.* Are you ſilent, monſter?

Mel. Good heav'ns! how I believ'd and lov'd this man! —Take him hence, for he's a diſeaſe to my ſight.

Ld. *Touch.* Secure that manifold villain.

[*Servants ſeize him.*

Care. Miracle of ingratitude!

Brisk. This is all very ſurprizing, let me periſh.

L. *Froth.* You know I told you Saturn look'd a little more angry than uſual.

Ld. *Touch.* We'll think of puniſhment at leiſure, but let me haſten to do juſtice, in rewarding virtue and wrong'd innocence.——Nephew, I hope I have your pardon, and Cynthia's.

Mel. We are your Lordſhip's creatures.

Ld. *Touch.* And be each other's comfort; —Let me join your hands:—Unwearied nights, and wiſhing days attend you both; mutual love, laſting health and circling joys, tread round each happy year of your long lives.

Let ſecret villany from hence be warn'd.
Howe'er in private miſchiefs are conceiv'd,
Torture and ſhame attend their open birth;
Like vipers in the womb, baſe treachery lies,
Still gnawing that, whence firſt it did ariſe;
No ſooner born but the vile parent dies.

[Exeunt Omnes.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. MOUNTFORD.

COu'd poets but foreſee how plays would take,
Then they cou'd tell what epilogues to make;
Whether to thank or blame their audience moſt:
But that late knowledge does much hazard coſt:
'Till dice are thrown, there's nothing won, nor loſt.
So 'till the thief has ſtoll'n, he cannot know
Whether he ſhall eſcape the law, or no.
But poets run much greater hazards far,
Than they who ſtand their trials at the bar;
The law provides a curb for its own fury,
And ſuffers judges to direct the jury.
But in this court, what diff'rence does appear!
For every one's both judge and jury here;
Nay, and what's worſe, an executioner.
All have a right and title to ſome part,
Each chuſing that in which he has moſt art.
The dreadful men of learning all confound,
Unleſs the fable's good, and morals ſound.
The vizor-masks, that are in pit and gallery,
Approve, or damn, the repartee and rallery.
The lady critics, who are better read,
Enquire if characters are nicely bred;
If the ſoft things are penn'd and ſpoke with grace:
They judge of action too, and time, and place;
In which we do not doubt but they're diſcerning,
For that's a kind of aſſignation learning.
Beaus judge of dreſs; the witlings judge of ſongs;
The cuckoldom, of ancient right, to cits belongs.

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EPILOGUE.

Poor poets thus the favour are deny'd,
Even to make exceptions when they're try'd.
'Tis hard that they muſt ev'ry one admit:
Methinks I ſee ſome faces in the pit,
Which muſt of conſequence be foes to wit.
You who can judge, to ſentence may proceed;
But tho' he cannot write, let him be freed
At leaſt from their contempt, who cannot read.